Hostility in the House of God: An “Interested” Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy

Dillon T. Thornton

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Abstract

To my knowledge, Pietersen’s study (2004) is the only monograph published in the last twenty years that has focused on the opponents in the Pastoral Epistles, but his work is not exegetical. In this thesis, I concentrate on 1 and 2 Timothy, the two letters purportedly dispatched to Ephesus. I assemble the relevant pericopae of the letters and offer an exegetical analysis of them, with the intention of providing, first, a composite sketch of the ideology of the opposing group and, second, an in-depth account of the way the faithful Pauline community was to engage these opponents.

The first chapter of the thesis is devoted to preliminary issues and methodology. I argue that 1 and 2 Timothy constitute two types of letter, both dispatched in the late first century to the Christian community in Ephesus, each addressing a stage of the conflict in which the community was engaged. I further argue that the polemical portions of the letters reveal specific information about this conflict. I then formulate a stringent method for the study of Paul’s opponents. I summarize and critique historical-critical methodologies and bring the most recent work on theological interpretation of Scripture into dialogue with these methodologies. The result is a new approach to the study of opponents, one that remains rigorously tethered to the primary text and that is characterized by ecclesial concern.

In chapters two to six, I apply this method to 1 and 2 Timothy. In chapter two, I offer an exegetical analysis of the explicit units of 1 Timothy, those units where we have clear and certain reference to the opponents (1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-5; 6:2b-5, 20-21a). Chapters three and four focus on the implicit units in 1 Timothy, those units where we have highly probable reference to the opponents (1:8-11; 2:9-15; 4:6-10; 5:9-16; 6:6-10). In chapter five, I turn to 2 Timothy, analyzing the three explicit units (2:14-26; 3:1-9; 4:1-5) and the one implicit unit of the letter (2:8-13). In chapter six, I bring together the full gamut of data uncovered in the exegetical chapters, offering overall conclusions about the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy. As a follow-up to this, I enumerate what I perceive to be the most important implications of the findings for the house of God today.

My findings may be summarized as follows. I conclude that the opponents came from within the Christian community in Ephesus and that their teaching is best described as an erroneous eschatological position that derived from the complexity of Paul’s views.
Each doctrinal and ethical issue raised in the explicit and implicit units of the letters can be explained as a distortion of Pauline doctrine. Additionally, I contend that the opponents had an active “didactic/evangelistic ministry” in Ephesus, for which they received remuneration. They likely set out to recruit as large a following, and as large an income, as possible, but found a particularly fruitful field among the women in Ephesus. As I formulate my view of the opponents, I critique a number of the extant theories, including “Gnostic,” Jewish, and Proto-Montanist identifications.

I also conclude that the author engages with the false teachers in significant ways throughout the letters. I draw attention to a number of literary and theological maneuvers that are intended to counteract the opponents’ influence and/or to bolster the faithful community’s confidence as they struggle against the opponents. These include the way the author turns features of the opponents against them, his use of the faithful saying formula, the way he relates the Triune God and the principal adversary, Satan, to the opponents, and the way the author portrays the gospel as an unstoppable force in his own ministry. Though the author pictures the opponents as enemies of God, he also highlights the fact that the opponents are not beyond the reach of God’s grace; thus, Timothy is called to minister the saving word to them. In the explicit and implicit units, the author instructs Timothy to occupy himself with five specific activities: reflection on his commissioning and on the apostolic gospel, rejection of the opponents’ claims, proclamation of the healthy teaching, demonstration of the gospel in actions that are pleasing to God, and correction of the false teachers themselves. The wider faithful community is at least implicitly included in the activities of rejection, demonstration, and correction.
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SBLSymS | Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
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SBLWGRW | Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World
SHBC | Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary
SJT | *Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTSU | *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt*
SP | Sacra pagina
ST | *Studia theologica*
SwJT | *Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TDNT | *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
Them | Themelios
THKNT | Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
THNTC | Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
TJ | *Trinity Journal*
TLNT | *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*
TLZ | *Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TNNTC | Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TynBul | *Tyndale Bulletin*
TZ | *Theologische Zeitschrift*
VC | Vigiliae Christianae
VT | *Vetus Testamentum*
WBC | Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT | Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WTJ | *Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK | Zürcher Bibelkommentar
ZNW | *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
Writing has its lonely moments, but it is never a solitary exercise. Every author is indebted to a great number of individuals, and this is especially so in my case.

I think, first, of my supervisors. George Wieland offered invaluable comments from afar. My primary supervisor, Paul Trebilco, provided consistent encouragement, prompt feedback, and sagacious advice. Paul is a first-rate scholar and a front-line churchman. I consider myself fortunate indeed to have had such a mentor.

I think, second, of the family and friends who have helped me in this journey. Larry and Pam Thornton first introduced me to the sacred writings and have supported me in my theological studies in more ways than I could ever enumerate. Mark and Barbie Harrison have prayed without ceasing and showed profound generosity. Tim and Nancy Tuggle surprised me long ago with a munificent gesture; I have not forgotten. Jon Hicks, Josh Hurd, and Luke Hoselton were my regular interlocutors; they often sparked my thinking. The wonderful folk at Owaka Grace Fellowship gave me the opportunity to preach the Scriptures each week and made me and my family feel at home in New Zealand. My boys, Aidan Thomas and Cullen Timothy, always knew when my studies needed to be interrupted. Sometimes you just have to set aside the Greek text and go on a Gruffalo hunt. To these and to the many others who have been there for me, I deeply appreciate you.

Most of all, I thank my wife, Jamie. Her unwavering love and support and her unselfish concern for the advancement of the gospel make my work possible. Without Jamie, I would have quit long ago. I lovingly and gratefully dedicate this work to her.
Introduction

I. A Cloudy Conflict for the Church

Controversy plays a large part in 1 and 2 Timothy. In fact, as Philip Towner asserts, “There is general agreement that the heresy reflected in the Pastoral Epistles is the most important aspect of the background of these letters.” But the content of the opponents’ teaching and the author’s way of handling them are subjects of much debate. Jay Twomey writes, “For the historically minded scholar of the Pastorals, the identity and program of the Pastor’s opponents are a maddening conundrum since we are given almost no information about them at all. We do learn something about the Pastor himself, though, namely that he prefers not to engage his opponents directly, but rather by means of invective.” Likewise, Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, and more recently Raymond Collins, find a minimal amount of refutation in these letters; dismissal of the irritants is the author’s preferred tack. At the opposite end of the spectrum is Lewis Donelson, who suggests that the author of the Pastorals punctuates the letters with warnings of the false teachers, and “takes the time to describe them in some detail and to enumerate carefully what action should be taken against them.” Similarly, I. Howard Marshall claims that the opposition is sizeable, is winning support, and is dangerous: “Its success is so great that the writer considers it necessary to write letters which are largely motivated by the need to deal with it.”

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This selection of scholarship is sufficient to demonstrate the deadlock. Though virtually all interpreters acknowledge the presence of opponents in the communities of the Pastorals, there is considerable disagreement with respect to the precise details of the alternative group(s). Lone Fatum’s comment is particularly dispiriting: “What precisely [the opponents’] teaching is about is hard, if not downright impossible, to tell from the mockingly sarcastic and obviously caricaturing descriptions. Maybe the author does not really know himself; or maybe the identity and possible beliefs of his adversaries are not his concern. No wonder that discussions among interpreters seem to indicate that we shall never reach the final answer to the questions raised by the author’s allegations.”

C.K. Barrett’s analysis is rather dismal as well. “The result of [the author’s] staunch refusal to enter into disputation is that our picture of the heretics he reprobated is somewhat cloudy.”

While I have no lofty goal of providing the definitive, sky-clearing study of the opponents, the present work is a humble attempt to advance the discussion in such a way that will be especially beneficial for the church. An important presupposition of this study is that Holy Scripture is the church’s book. This is not to suggest that Scripture is the church’s invention. To the contrary, it is to affirm that “the church is brought into life and preserved in life by the communicative and reconciling action of the triune God, the one in whose presence and by whose gift the church has its life. That presence and gift are brought to bear upon the church by the action of the Spirit of the risen Christ in and through the prophetic and apostolic witnesses. Holy Scripture, therefore, is the instrument of Christ’s rule in the church.” The written Word is the Word of God “in, for, and over the church.”

Thus any study of Scripture, even a study of the opponents reflected in certain NT documents, should be conducted with an interest in hearing the voice of God for the body of Christ. The present work constitutes an exploratory exercise, an investigation of opponents that attempts to heed Robert Jenson’s sage advice: “Be

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9 Ibid., 53.
entirely blatant and unabashed in reading Scripture for the church’s purposes.” This notion will be discussed further in the following chapter, but it should be stated plainly from the outset.

Working from this premise, herein I will take up the task of unmasking the false teachers reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy, though I will insist on a particular type of “unmasking.” In short, I will endeavor to set forth the doctrinal strands and ethical norms that distinguished this group from the faithful Pauline community in Ephesus, and to examine the communal procedure, as prescribed by the author, for dealing with these deviationists. It is my hope that this study will benefit the church by clarifying her confession, as well as what her confession requires her to denounce, and by clarifying the church’s mission, especially as it relates to those who are hostile toward the apostolic gospel.

II. Recent Research

If once the Pastoral Epistles were forced to sit silently in their corner of the canon, at present they are being afforded ample opportunity to speak. The twenty-first century has seen a steady stream of monographs on these letters. While many of these works

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will be noted or discussed in due course, a brief and more general treatment of some of the works most relevant for my study is in order here.

Marianne Bjelland Kartzow (2009) interprets various passages of the Pastorals by using the larger, multidisciplinary field of gossip texts. Kartzow argues that the author of the Pastorals, in his process of naming and blaming his opponents, labels them gossipers through the way he characterizes their speech. She contends: “The many hints that the opponents are weak and far from the ideal standard are often related to their speech: as agitators, they are said to be idle and frivolous talkers (Tit 1:10-11); they do not understand what they are talking about (1 Tim 1:6-7); what they say is empty sound (2 Tim 2:16-17); their teaching is like profane myths (1 Tim 4:7); what they say is profane and empty chatter (1 Tim 6:20). They represented modes of speech that were not to be found in real men.” Kartzow concludes that the author of the Pastorals employs terms drawn from the stereotype of gossip in order to “undermine his opponents’ masculinity and hence their authority.” While there are insights in this study that will prove helpful for my investigation, Kartzow takes a thematic approach, focusing only on gossip and gender, so she does not provide us with a full picture of the opponents.

Mark Yarbrough (2009) focuses on Paul’s utilization of extant material in 1 Timothy. The thesis of Yarbrough’s work is that the author employs preformed traditions

12 Kartzow, Gossip and Gender, 6.
13 Ibid., 194.
14 Ibid., 201.

to “strengthen literary cohesion, provide rhetorical leverage, and present theological
directives that combat counter-mission doctrine in the letter.” Yarbrough identifies
twelve preformed traditions (1 Tim 1:8-10, 15a-b, 17; 2:5-6; 3:1, 16; 4:8, 9-10a; 5:24-25;
6:7, 10a, 11-16), and he argues that each tradition piece exposes an error of the
opponents. While his discussion of the opponents’ teaching and conduct is quite brief,
Yarbrough asserts that these teachers clearly are in error, and that Timothy is called to
engage them in spiritual battle. But, for Yarbrough, “the beginning of the battle is
embedded in the letter itself.” He argues, “Not only are the [preformed traditions]
placed throughout the address, thus providing great cohesion to the letter, they are
strategic in their content, which corresponds to the circumstantial context of the Ephesian
community. An evaluation of the traditional units proves most interesting as each
tradition component functions as a theological directive against the opponents.” Though
he rightly draws attention to the theological rebuttal of the opponents contained in 1
Timothy, we will need to consider whether or not there is sufficient evidence to suggest
that the opponents are in view as often as Yarbrough suggests.

Another work of great importance is Claire Smith’s study (2012) of the
educational character of early Christian communities. Working within the parameters of 1
Corinthians and the Pastorals, Smith examines the vocabulary of “teaching.” She analyzes
fifty-five different words, representing nine semantic groupings, and argues that the
communities portrayed in these letters are best described as “scholastic communities” or
“learning communities.” Smith notes the association of teaching activities with “a
recognized, authoritative body of content of divine origin, which was fixed, or at least
stable.” She argues, “This content was consistently drawn from or based on the Jewish
Scriptures, the apostolic gospel and/or the letters themselves… Teaching that did not
conform to this stable body of content was to be rejected as false teaching.” Though
Smith touches on the corrective measures of these learning communities, in my view

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15 Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 6.
16 Ibid., 187, with a helpful chart of the preformed traditions he identifies and the
errors they supposedly combat.
17 Ibid., 182.
18 Ibid.
19 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 377, 390–391.
20 Ibid., 378.
21 Ibid., 378–379.
22 See especially her discussion of “correcting” words (Ibid., 313–351).
more can be said about the ways in which believers were to handle those who promulgated foreign doctrine.

To my knowledge, Lloyd Pietersen’s work, *The Polemic of the Pastorals* (2004), is the only monograph written in the last twenty-five years that focuses on the opponents in the Pastoral Epistles, though his approach is primarily sociological, not exegetical. Utilizing insights from the sociology of deviance, Pietersen argues that the Pastorals should be understood as a literary version of a status degradation ceremony: “Previously influential insiders in the communities addressed are transformed into outsiders.”

Pietersen builds on the works of J.M. Ford (1971), Egbert Schlarb (1990), and Michael Goulder (1996), concluding that the opponents addressed in these letters advocate a form of spirituality informed by a view of Paul as primarily a thaumaturge. Pietersen argues, “There was a power struggle taking place in the immediate post-Pauline communities between factions with competing memories of Paul.” The Pastorals claim Paul as the teacher *par excellence*, and the opponents are labeled as false teachers because they advocate a form of enthusiasm or ecstatic spirituality that is rooted in the memory of a charismatic and wonder-working Paul. “Through teaching and tradition, thaumaturgy is combated.” The problem with Pietersen’s study, as I hope to demonstrate throughout this work, is that a number of his conclusions result from “an over-ambitious attempt at mirror-reading,” the very mistake he accuses other scholars of making.

In my estimation, there exists a need for a methodologically careful study that assembles all the relevant passages in 1 and 2 Timothy and offers an exegetical analysis of these pericopae, with the intention of providing, first, a composite sketch of the ideology of the opponents in Ephesus and, second, an in-depth account of the way the Christian community was to handle the hostility in the house of God. This is the task attempted here.

### III. Designations and Delimitation

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28 Ibid., 118, 134–137.
29 Ibid., 137.
30 Ibid., 110.
A. “Pastoral Epistles”

The title “Pastoral Epistles” (*Pastoralbriefe*) was apparently given to 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus by D.N. Berdot in 1703, and the Halle exegete, Paul Anton, followed this designation in 1726.\(^{31}\) Though the title is widely used today, it is best to set aside this sobriquet. The documents do not constitute a primer on church polity, and there is little to suggest that the first addressees should be thought of as pastors. While Paul gives both Timothy and Titus instructions concerning the installation of pastors/elders (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), he does not use this title of either individual. Though we certainly find in these letters *implications* for pastors/elders today,\(^{32}\) the evidence suggests that Timothy and Titus were delegates given unique assignments by Paul.\(^{33}\) Therefore, “Pauline Delegates” (hereafter PD) is more accurate and serves as better shorthand for 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus.\(^{34}\)

B. “Opponents”

Throughout this work I will use a variety of designations for the “certain ones” who “teach different doctrine” (1 Tim 1:3). These include “deviationists,” “errorists,” “adversaries,” “enemies,” and “false teachers.” As I employ them, these designations are synonymous with the term “opponents.” Some scholars have suggested a one-size-fits-all definition of Pauline opponents. Paul Barnett, for example, defines opponents of Paul as “outsiders who have penetrated the Pauline assemblies.”\(^{35}\) To offer at this stage a precise definition of the “opponents” in 1 and 2 Timothy would be to preempt our investigation; thus, I will work from a tacit definition, assuming some level of antagonism to Paul.

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\(^{32}\) In the concluding portion of this study, I will highlight what I perceive to be some of these implications.


\(^{34}\) See the discussion in Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 88–89. Towner prefers to think of these as “letters to coworkers” in contrast to “letters to churches.”

himself and/or his message and mission, and allowing 1 and 2 Timothy to fill in the exact details of the conflict.\(^{36}\)

C. The Exclusion of Titus

The opponents reflected in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus routinely are herded into the same corral.\(^{37}\) Gerd Lüdemann says, “[The Pastorals] have a unitary stamp which distinguishes them from all the other letters of Paul: they presuppose the same organization, similar conditions in the community and the same adversaries.”\(^{38}\) Most recently, however, scholars have suggested that in Titus we find horses of a (slightly) different color.\(^{39}\) Titus alone refers to “those of the circumcision” (Titus 1:10). Additionally, the impact of the opponents on women, which is emphasized in both 1 Timothy (2:9-15; 5:9-16) and 2 Timothy (3:1-9), is missing in Titus. In the end, I have opted to exclude Titus from the present study because of its purported destination. In the following chapter, I hope to demonstrate that there is no good reason to doubt that both 1 and 2 Timothy were sent to Ephesus. Titus, on the other hand, claims to address the delegate stationed in Crete. In my view, the difference in destination is a factor significant enough to warrant a separate investigation of the opponents in Titus. Thus, this study will examine the opponents reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy only.

IV. The Plan for the Present Work

The plan for the present work is as follows. In the first chapter, I will articulate my general approach to 1 and 2 Timothy. I will argue that we are dealing with two types

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of letter, both dispatched in the late first century to the Christian community in Ephesus, each addressing in a unique way a stage of the conflict in which the community was engaged. Additionally, I will argue that the polemical portions of these letters reveal specific information about this conflict. Having dealt with these preliminary issues, I will then proceed to construct a new method for the study of opponents. I hope to demonstrate that, while many of the principles that compose the standard historical-critical procedure for the study of opponents are sound, the procedure itself is in some ways defective. I will endeavor to show that the standard procedure typically yields ambiguous designations and historical reconstructions that control the exegesis of the primary text. The greatest problem with the standard procedure, however, is that it circumvents the needs of the church. Thus, I will outline an alternative approach, one that is characterized by ecclesial concern and that remains tethered to those portions of the primary text where we have good reason to think the opponents are in view (i.e., the explicit and implicit units). This should allow me to arrive at more certain, though perhaps less elaborate, conclusions that will be in the interest of the church. I will therefore refer to this approach as an “interested” investigation of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy.

In the remainder of the study (chapters two to six), I will apply this method to the primary text. In chapter two, I will offer an exegetical analysis of what I will classify as the explicit units in 1 Timothy (1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-5; 6:2b-5, 20-21a). Chapters three and four will focus on what I will call the implicit units in 1 Timothy (1:8-11; 2:9-15; 4:6-10; 5:9-16; 6:6-10). The hobgoblin of consistency begged me to treat 2 Timothy in the same manner, separating the explicit and the implicit units, but, as I identify only one implicit unit in the second letter, I will group all polemical portions of 2 Timothy together in a single chapter. In chapter five, I first analyze what I classify as the three explicit passages of 2 Timothy (2:14-26; 3:1-9; 4:1-5). I then turn to the one implicit passage in the letter (2:8-13). In chapter six, I will offer some overall conclusions about the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy. This chapter will consist of two main parts: a disciplined description of the opponents and a detailed account of the communal reaction to the opponents (i.e., the tactics of the author himself and the procedure the author formulates for the wider community). The study will conclude with a consideration of the implications for the house of God today.

\[40\] In the following chapter, I will explain precisely what I mean by explicit and implicit units.
1
Methodology

Introduction

Hypotheses about the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy are legion. This is not at all unique; theories pile up for each of the polemical writings of the NT. Forty years ago, John Gunther compiled quite an impressive list for the Pauline letters. Gunther found no less than eight suggestions for the identification of the opponents in Galatians, eight for Romans, fourteen for 2 Corinthians, eighteen for Philippians, nineteen for the PD, and a total of forty-four for Colossians! Given the importance of understanding the opponents of the early Christians, numerous scholars have directed their efforts to this task with great zeal. Unfortunately, this zeal has not always been according to methodological knowledge.

In this first chapter, I will formulate a stringent method for the study of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy. Before I do so, however, it will be necessary for me to articulate my general approach to the target literature. In the first section of the chapter, I will argue that 1 Timothy is an epistolary version of the Mandata Principis, and that 2 Timothy is a personal paraenetic letter nonpareil. I will suggest that both letters were dispatched to the Christian community in Ephesus, a community that was subject to the influence of false teachers. I will further argue that the polemical portions of the letters can be mined for specific information about these false teachers. After addressing these preliminary matters, I will construct a method for the study of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy. The final section of the chapter will be composed of a survey of select methodological works composed in the last half century, a critique of the standard historical-critical approach to the study of opponents, and an outline of what I will call an “interested” investigation of opponents.

I. Approaching 1 and 2 Timothy as Letters
A. The Author and Destination of 1 and 2 Timothy

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1 Gunther, St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background, 1–4. A survey of theories is provided by Schlarb, Die gesunde Lehre, 73–82. See also Pietersen, Polemic of the Pastorals, 4–26.
Throughout this study, I will use the designations provided in 1 and 2 Timothy, referring to the author of the letters as “Paul” and referring to the first addressee as “Timothy.” A full discussion of authorship is outside the purview of this project; however, inasmuch as my exegetical arguments often will be advanced by comparison with the undisputed letters of Paul, a brief treatment of the authorship issue is in order.

Due to the historical, ecclesiastical, theological, and lexical peculiarities of 1 and 2 Timothy,² the majority of NT scholars today maintain that the letters are the products of a Pauline admirer or “school,” written in the late first century, or perhaps in the early second century.³ I am not yet convinced that the PD are best explained as pseudonymous letters. In my view, the arguments against the consensus of pseudonymity, raised especially by Luke Timothy Johnson,⁴ deserve careful consideration. But since I am

² These peculiarities are well documented and need not be rehearsed here.

interested in the opponents reflected in the letters, and since I am not concerned with locating these opponents on the socio-religious map of antiquity (discussed below), it is not necessary for me to suggest a precise date of composition, nor is it necessary for me to argue for one view of authorship over the other. Therefore, for the purpose of this project, I will adopt a somewhat “agnostic” position with respect to authorship. I will approach 1 and 2 Timothy as letters written either by the Apostle Paul himself at the end of his life or by an early interpreter of Paul who sought to transmit the Pauline tradition in the late first century. Jerome Quinn and William Wacker rightly note: “If the PE originated in the second century, it is striking that they, intent on transmitting the Pauline heritage, do not quote the apostle’s own words.” It is also highly likely that Pol. Phil. 4.1 alludes to 1 Tim 6:10, 7 and that Pol. Phil. 9.2 alludes to 2 Tim 4:10, which suggests that 1 and 2 Timothy were in circulation in the early second century. Moreover, it seems likely that Ignatius is familiar with the PD: Magn. 8.1 resembles a number of Paul’s comments about the opponents (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:14, 16), and Pol. 6.2 could be an allusion to 2 Tim 2:4. Thus, the letters probably were written before ca. 105-110 C.E. Malcolm Gill probably is correct in setting the range of composition at ca. 64-100 C.E.

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5 I attempt to maintain this either-or position as much as is possible, though I am fully aware that some of my arguments below, such as the points made about the historical Paul’s knowledge of Greco-Roman letter writing, are most relevant if 1 and 2 Timothy are considered to be authentic.  
6 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 19.  
8 Merz, Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus, 160-161: “Auffällig ist neben den offensichtlichen Parallelen der Gebrauch von ὁμολογεῖν am Schluss der Polemiken. Beide Male wird den Gegnern das, was sie für sich in Anspruch nahmen (Gott zu kennen, die Gnade empfangen zu haben), durch ein Wortspiel entrungen.” Merz argues that, while there is no way of proving that here in Magn. 8:1 Ignatius relies on the PD, the cumulative case that the letters influenced Ignatius is strong.  
9 See the discussion of the dating of Ignatius’ letters in Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus From Paul to Ignatius, 628-632. The majority of scholars have dated the letters between 98 and 117 C.E.  
10 See Gill, Jesus as Mediator, 71-78. Gill focuses on 1 Timothy. But, since it seems likely that Ignatius has knowledge of 2 Timothy, 64-100 C.E. is the most probable range for both 1 and 2 Timothy.
I also understand 1 and 2 Timothy to be written to a real person engaged in a real conflict.\textsuperscript{11} The first addressee is either Paul’s apostolic delegate, Timothy (if authentic), or a subsequent leader of the early Christian community (if pseudonymous).\textsuperscript{12} In the case of the latter option, Timothy probably was chosen as the first addressee because he was remembered as a key Pauline coworker, as one who had previously implemented Paul’s instructions in crucial situations facing his churches (e.g., 1 Cor 4:17).\textsuperscript{13} Whether doubly authentic or doubly pseudonymous, the destination of both letters was most likely Ephesus. In 1 Tim 1:3, Paul urges Timothy to remain in Ephesus. It is clear from the beginning of the letter body that the first addressee has responsibilities in this particular location. Ephesus is also mentioned in both 2 Tim 1:18 and 2 Tim 4:12. Furthermore, a number of the individuals mentioned in the letters have a documented connection with Ephesus, including Timothy (1 Cor 4:17; 16:11; 1 Tim 1:2, 18; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:2), Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18:18-19, 26; 2 Tim 4:19), Tychicus (Acts 20:4; 21:49; 2 Tim 4:12), Erastus (Acts 19:22; 2 Tim 4:20), and Trophimus (Acts 20:4; 21:29; 2 Tim 4:12). This is evidence of the author’s concern for the Christian community in Ephesus, which bolsters the likelihood that the intended destination of both 1 and 2 Timothy was Ephesus.\textsuperscript{14} I

\textsuperscript{11} Dibelius and Conzelmann, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 66, claim that the author of the PD refers to the opponents with intentional imprecision because the opponents are a literary construct. “The author attempts to characterize his opponents as broadly as possible, in order to create an apologetic \textit{vademecum} for all sorts of anti-Gnostic conflicts.” Few scholars today hold this view. While there exists a vast array of views regarding the identity of the opponents, there is general agreement that the author of the PD is responding to real adversaries, that is, a group or groups that existed in a specific place and time.

\textsuperscript{12} Philip H. Towner, “Pauline Theology or Pauline Tradition in the Pastoral Epistles: The Question of Method,” \textit{TynBul} 46 (1995): 288–289, says the scholarly consensus is that 1 and 2 Timothy are addressed to a real community.

\textsuperscript{13} Trebilco, \textit{The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius}, 205. See also Collins, \textit{1 and 2 Timothy and Titus}, 10; Schnelle, \textit{The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings}, 334–335.

\textsuperscript{14} Trebilco, \textit{The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius}, 206–209, provides a thorough treatment of the question: Was Ephesus the intended destination of 1 and 2 Timothy? He concludes that both letters were sent “to Christians in Ephesus with particular application to their situation, and can provide us with information about Christians in that city” (209). While I agree with Trebilco’s conclusion, I acknowledge the fact that he and other proponents of the pseudonymous position are open to the criticism of inconsistency here: the letters were not really written by the Apostle Paul to his delegate, Timothy, but the letters were actually sent to Ephesus. For further discussion of Ephesus as the most likely destination, see Schnelle, \textit{The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings}, 333; Gill, \textit{Jesus as Mediator}, 78-82; Pietersen, \textit{The Polemic of the Pastorals}, 112.
hope to demonstrate in the forthcoming chapters that the conflict in Ephesus reflected in 2 Timothy is similar to the conflict reflected in 1 Timothy, which probably means the second letter was written no more than a few years after the first.15

Because I understand 1 and 2 Timothy to be written either by the Apostle Paul or by an early interpreter of Paul, I will draw freely from the full Pauline corpus—undisputed letters and disputed letters—when doing comparative work.16 If, as Marshall suggests, the letters were written by someone close to Paul, a person in the tradition who

15 With Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 253. Jerry L. Sumney, Identifying Paul’s Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians, JSNTSup 40 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 88, is surely right when he claims that it is best to interpret letters individually, “because they are particularly well suited to addressing specific situations.” But the evidence of these letters leads me to conclude that 1 and 2 Timothy address (albeit rather differently) the same conflict in Ephesus. Contra Jerry L. Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, JSNTSup 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 289-290, 301-302; Jerome Murphy-O’Conner, “2 Timothy Contrasted with 1 Timothy and Titus,” RB 98 (1991): 403–418. Murphy-O’Conner has strenuously objected to the notion that the conflict in 2 Timothy is similar to the conflict in 1 Timothy, but there are methodological problems with his argument. For example, he concludes from 1 Tim 4:13 that, because the opponents were misusing the OT, some in the community felt the public reading of Scripture should be dispensed with, but the author could not give his assent to this radical modification of the tradition. He goes on to suggest that the use of the OT is not a problem at all in 2 Timothy, stating that “it is singled out for exceptional praise” in 2 Tim 3:16-17 (417). But here Murphy-O’Conner simply refuses to apply his mirror-reading technique to 2 Timothy. If the technique used in 1 Tim 4:13 were applied to 2 Tim 3:16-17, then this passage as well could be understood as a response to the opponents—all Scripture is useful, despite the fact that the opponents misuse it. Philip H. Towner, “Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm,” JSNT 31 (1987): 95, refers to “the situation in Ephesus,” that is, the situation reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy, “which differs in a number of respects from that of Crete.” See also Frances Young, The Theology of the Pastoral Letters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8, who finds the same opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy; Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 227–228, who argues that the same group of opponents is in view in 1 and 2 Timothy, while a related but slightly different group is in view in Titus; Oropeza, Jews, Gentiles, and the Opponents of Paul, 261, 295, who claims that the PD can be read together, though he questions whether the identity of the group in Crete (Titus) is precisely the same as the opponents in Ephesus (1 and 2 Timothy).

16 This exegetical approach has been taken by Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 98, and also more recently by Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 34. Like Smith’s work, my study is primarily synchronic in nature. While at times a brief discussion of diachronic factors will be provided, it is vocabulary use in the LXX, non-canonical sources close to the first century, and the NT in particular which will be examined to illuminate nebulous portions of the target literature.
“continued to write as (they thought that) he would have done,” then it is logical to utilize the full Pauline corpus when attempting to clarify the author’s ideology and terminology. My position on authorship, however, leaves room for both the discovery in 1 and 2 Timothy of notions that are consistent with the undisputed Paul and the recognition of theological development.

B. 1 Timothy as an Epistolary Version of the Mandata Principis

As is evident from the opening salutation, 1 Timothy is a letter written first to a single reader (Τιμόθεω γυνησίω τέκνω ἐν πίστει, 1:2). But the epistle ends with a benediction couched in the plural form (Ἡ χάρις μεθ' ὑμῶν, 6:21). Additionally, Paul strategically targets Timothy with the majority of his commands (roughly thirty second-person singular imperatives), but there are a number of third-person imperatives (2:11; 3:10, 12; 4:12; 5:4, 9, 16, 17; 6:1, 2), as well as a general concern for the gathered church (e.g., 3:15). Is it best, then, to read 1 Timothy as a Private Letter or as some sort of Public or Official Letter?

A number of the major commentators treat 1 Timothy as an Official Letter. This seems to be how Ceslas Spicq classifies the letter. In his 1969 commentary, Spicq argues that “les Pastorales, surtout les lettres à Timothée, sont des Mandements et des Instructions,” and, “le 'genre littéraire' de nos trois écrits est assimilable à ces ordonnances, décrets, édits et prescriptions verbales que l’administration des gouvernements hellénistiques rédigeait sous forme de correspondance…” This is a shift from the introduction to the first edition of Spicq’s commentary (1947), in which he went to great lengths to argue that 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus should not be understood as “official correspondence,” but as private letters. Jürgen Roloff concurs with Spicq’s latter assessment. He explains: “sind sie keine Privatbriefe, sondern Schreiben höchst offiziellen Charakters.”

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17 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 84.  
20 Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 20.
Of the scholars who have fairly recently concentrated on the question of genre, Johnson has probably contributed the most to the conversation.\(^{21}\) In his commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy, Johnson brings a more specific classification into focus. He claims that 1 Timothy fits the form of royal correspondence called the *mandata principis* letter (literally, “commandments of a ruler”).\(^{22}\) Johnson asserts: “There is a body of letter writing that can be termed broadly ‘royal correspondence,’ and that is extant partially through inscriptions and partially through papyri fragments. The collections include a variety of communications between royal officials and cities, as well as between royal officials and their subordinates.”\(^{23}\) Johnson believes that this latter category provides an analogy to the relationship reflected in 1 Timothy: the Apostle Paul writes to his delegate, Timothy, with specific instructions concerning the delegate’s mission. *Mandata principis* letters, Johnson claims, were addressed first to a specific subordinate or delegate; however, the letters had at least a quasi-public character, for the commandments were to be heard by the community in which the delegate was situated. In the case of 1 Timothy, then, the letter probably was crafted for public reading, both as a way of showing the Christian community that Paul fully supported his delegate, and as a way of putting the delegate forward as an example.\(^{24}\)

But some have questioned the research behind Johnson’s proposal. The most notable objection comes from Margaret Mitchell, who strongly critiques Johnson’s appeal to PTebt 703 as an almost perfect example of a *mandata principis* letter.\(^{25}\) Mitchell also questions the way Johnson uses the works of Benjamin Fiore and Michael Wolter.\(^{26}\) She maintains that PTebt 703 is not a letter, but a memorandum.\(^{27}\) Mitchell concludes that Johnson wrongly turned “*mandata principis*” into an adjectival phrase modifying the word “letter,” and in so doing he “introduced both a neologism and a new literary

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\(^{21}\) But see also Richards, *Difference and Distance in Post-Pauline Christianity*, 180-185, who suggests that a pseudepigrapher boiled down the genuine Pauline corpus, which resulted in the literary summary, or “Letter-Essay,” that is 1 Timothy. 

\(^{22}\) Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 97.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 139.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 140–141.

\(^{25}\) See Mitchell, “PTebt 703 and the Genre of 1 Timothy,” 344-370.


\(^{27}\) Mitchell, “PTebt 703 and the Genre of 1 Timothy,” 363–364.
category.”[28] In Mitchell’s view, imperial mandata are discussed and negotiated in letters, as the Pliny/Trajan correspondence illustrates, but this does not mean that the mandata themselves are an epistolary form.

In his 2006 commentary, Towner takes up the question of whether there are known literary antecedents that might explain the shape of the PD. He agrees with Johnson that the mandate documents provide the closest parallel to 1 Timothy; however, he concurs with Mitchell’s argument that the mandate documents should not be considered as letters, but as memoranda.[29] Towner concludes: “If the mandata are not generically epistolary in form, there are nonetheless examples in the correspondence of Pliny and Trajan in which royal mandates are communicated within the context of letters. Such a coalescing of literary elements into a broader letter form may show something of the process by which 1 Timothy [was written].”[30]

In the end, it seems most fitting to classify 1 Timothy as an epistolary version of the mandata principis. It is right to presume that Paul had a working knowledge of Greco-Roman letter writing. M. Luther Stirewalt notes: “As a highly literate person corresponding with geographically scattered groups of people, Paul was deeply enmeshed in the communicative world of his day. He was, therefore, exposed to the forms, functions, and settings of various types of letters that were being written… The forms and functions of [various] types were freely available to him, and he drew upon them, consciously or otherwise, when he realized the necessity of resorting to letter writing and as he developed the apostolic letter.”[31] It is also reasonable to suggest that Paul was aware of mandata documents, since they were available in Greek in the Imperial provinces.[32]

What we have in 1 Timothy, most likely, is a blending of the Greco-Roman letter and the mandata document. Paul, well acquainted with the epistolary and literary conventions of his day, “visualized the ministerial needs confronting him and adopted, molded, and devised a communicative form equal to the challenge.”[33] The unique ministerial situation called for a unique form of letter, one that we do not find elsewhere in the NT (with the exception of Titus). In summary, 1 Timothy is a letter in which Paul provides theological

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[28] Ibid., 364.
[30] Ibid., 35.
[33] Stirewalt, Paul, the Letter Writer, 26.
and ethical instructions for his delegate in Ephesus, with the understanding that the wider Pauline community will overhear these instructions.\textsuperscript{34} 

C. The Purpose, Motif, and Basic Structure of 1 Timothy

The theological high point of Paul’s argument in 1 Timothy is found in 3:14-16, and the purpose of the letter is encapsulated in 3:15; Paul wants Timothy and the wider Christian community in Ephesus to know how they must “conduct [themselves] in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and support for the truth.”\textsuperscript{35} Paul first compares the gathered people of God (ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος) to a house (σῶσεθ). The household metaphor, used frequently in the letters, probably highlights two aspects of the congregation: 1) the relationship and shared responsibilities of believers,\textsuperscript{36} and 2) the need for direction and proper instruction in the church.\textsuperscript{37} Next, Paul employs a hypocatastasis, implicitly comparing the Christian faith, and primarily the gospel (τῆς ἀληθείας), to a structure, and stating that believers are the pillars and support beams (στῦλος καὶ ἔδραίωμα) that uphold this gospel structure.\textsuperscript{38} \textsuperscript{στῦλος} occurs four times in the

\textsuperscript{34} Barentsen, \textit{Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission}, 203, rightly says that the community is indirectly included.


\textsuperscript{36} See Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus}, 273–274. Towner summarizes this element well: “Just as there are rules of accepted behavior, relationships to observe, and responsibilities to fulfill within the household, so there are analogous patterns to be observed in God’s church.”

\textsuperscript{37} I. Howard Marshall, “Book of 1 Timothy,” in \textit{Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible}, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 803, rightly notes that the body metaphor (e.g., Rom 12; 1 Cor 12) has little (if anything) to say about leadership and structure, but the household metaphor recognizes the need for direction in the Christian community. See also his discussion in \textit{New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 416–417. Young, \textit{The Theology of the Pastoral Letters}, 74–96, emphasizes instruction: “The household of God is a teaching and learning community” (89).

NT (1 Tim 3:15; Gal 2:9; Rev 3:12; 10:1) and often in the LXX; it refers to supportive columns (e.g., 1 Kgs 7:3ff.). The meaning of ἑδραῖωμα is less certain. A number of translations have been suggested for this NT hapax, including “ground” (KJV and NKJV), “foundation” (NIV), “bulwark” (RSV and NRSV), and “buttress” (ESV). Here, the link with στῦλος hints that, rather than being the lowest, load-bearing part of a building, the ἑδραῖωμα is another supportive portion of the structure.\textsuperscript{39} The point of this final figure of speech is crucial: the Christian community in Ephesus must stand firm and support the truth in the face of opposition. Though a number of important themes surface throughout the letter, we may say that the motif of 1 Timothy is the necessity of standing firm in the faith and safeguarding the gospel.\textsuperscript{40} The overall structure of the body of the letter bears witness to this.

The letter body may be divided into five large blocks: 1:3-20; 2:1-3:13; 3:14-4:16; 5:1-6:2a; 6:2b-21a. There is a noteworthy pattern of oscillation in the letter: Paul moves back and forth between Timothy’s task of correcting the opponents (1:3-20; 3:14-4:16; 6:2b-21)\textsuperscript{41} and general instruction for the house of God (2:1-3:13; 5:1-6:2a). A simple outline of the body is as follows.

- **The Problem of the Opponents and Timothy’s Task of Correction: Part 1** (1:3-20)
- **The House of God: Orderly Worship and Qualified Leaders** (2:1-3:13)
- **The Problem of the Opponents and Timothy’s Task of Correction: Part 2** (3:14-4:16)
- **The House of God: Ministering to Different Groups** (5:1-6:2a)
- **The Problem of the Opponents and Timothy’s Task of Correction: Part 3** (6:2b-21a)\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39} Also, if Paul pictured the base or foundation of a building here, he probably would have used his more standard term, θεμέλιος, as he does in 2 Tim 2:19 and elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{40} This is quite similar to what Marshall (The Pastoral Epistles, 31) identifies as the motif of the letter. He writes: “The truth of the gospel is the broad theme—Timothy is to defend it against heresy; practice it in his own life; and develop a church order which is in harmony with and promotes it.”

\textsuperscript{41} This is not to suggest that the opponents are in view in every verse of these blocks, nor is it to suggest that the footprints of the opponents cannot be found elsewhere in the letter. My intention here is to sketch a general outline that captures the overall theme of each larger block of the letter. I will deal below with how we might best determine which specific units of the letter address the opponents.

\textsuperscript{42} Many scholars (especially prior to 1970) have viewed the PD as hopelessly jumbled letters, together forming a hodgepodge of churchy confabulation. But a number of influential works in recent years have pointed to the coherence of the PD. Many, if not
D. 2 Timothy as a Personal Paraenetic Letter Nonpareil

The second letter to Timothy presents the interpreter with similar, but not identical, intricacies. Like 1 Timothy, the letter is first addressed to a single reader (Τιµοθέῳ ἀγαπητῷ τέκνῳ, 1:2). Unlike 1 Timothy, the epistle ends with a benediction that includes both a second-singular and a second-plural pronoun (Ὁ κύριος μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος σου. ἡ χάρις μεθ΄ ὑμῶν, 4:22). In this case, the second-plural in the benediction does not suggest that the letter is to be overheard by the congregation, as was the case in 1 Timothy. Rather, the phrase ἡ χάρις μεθʻ ὑμῶν is best understood as a blessing extended to the individual recipient’s community. This was a common way of closing a personal letter in the ancient world. It is akin to ending a telephone conversation with the cordial remark, “Give your family my best.” This interpretation of the plural benediction is signaled by the prevalence of second-singular imperatives in the letter (over thirty in only eighty-three verses), which constitutes strong evidence that 2 Timothy was originally a one-to-one correspondence. But what precisely is the nature of this correspondence?

In light of Paul’s words in 2 Tim 4:6, some interpreters have classified the letter as a testament, an elusive genre of literature popular during the Second Temple period. Testamentary literature is usually believed to be pseudonymous. Gordon Fee, however, maintains that 2 Timothy is an example of an authentic farewell speech, describing the letter as “a kind of last will and testament, a ‘passing of the mantle.’” For Fee, the main thrust of the letter is “an appeal for Timothy to carry on the ministry of the gospel after Paul’s death.”

One of the most innovative classifications for 2 Timothy comes from Michael Prior. Prior has thoroughly critiqued the view that 2 Timothy is a farewell letter or last will and testament. In his 1989 monograph, Paul the Letter-Writer and the Second Letter to Timothy, Prior argues that only one passage (2 Tim 4:6-8) suggests that the letter might...
be a testament. Prior seeks to demonstrate that the classification of 2 Timothy as a farewell letter is due to the tradition of the martyrdom of Paul being read back into 2 Tim 4:6, which has led to a misinterpretation of this key verse. For Prior, nothing else in the letter suggests that the apostle was indulging in his final goodbye to his delegate. He claims: “It is very odd indeed that there are no parting words to reflect Paul’s affection for Timothy… such as one would expect in the final correspondence between Paul and one of his most energetic co-workers. One would expect a very warm, and sorrowful farewell.” In light of this, Prior departs from the conventional reading of σπένδω and ἀνάλυσις, and translates 2 Tim 4:6: “For my part I am already spent, and the time for my release is at hand.” In Prior’s view, σπένδω reflects Paul’s total dedication to his task of ministry, and ἀνάλυσις refers to his release from prison. His conclusion, then, is that Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment (recorded at the end of Acts) around 62 C.E., recruited a group of missionary workers, and continued his missionary work for another three to seven years. While still in prison, Paul wrote to Timothy, inviting the young delegate to journey to Rome to become a part of the mission team he was assembling. But Paul also wrote to prepare Timothy for this task by encouraging him to persevere, even in the face of suffering. In essence, Prior sees 2 Timothy as a letter of recruitment and encouragement.

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49 Ibid., 111.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 108. See also Smith, *Timothy’s Task, Paul’s Prospect*, 101-132, who agrees with Prior that σπένδω refers to pouring out wine drink offerings, not bloody oblations, though he is not convinced by Prior’s overall reading of 2 Tim 4:6-8. Smith concludes: “The wine libation imagery is used intentionally by the author to draw upon the purpose and imagery of the cultic wine libations being offered by priests at the Temple” (117). The drink offerings in the OT were offered to enhance the aroma of the burnt offerings; thus, Smith argues that the drink offering of Paul refers to his defense trial (2 Tim 4:16-17) in which his action of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles was like an aromatic wine drink offering. He further argues that καὶ δημος τῆς ἀναλύσιμος μου ἐφέστηκεν (v. 6b) refers to Paul’s confident hope that he will be released from prison soon due to the success of his defense trial.
53 Ibid., 165.
54 Ibid., 170.
Prior’s creative interpretation of 2 Tim 4:6 has not persuaded recent commentators. Johnson holds a more traditional view of 4:6, seeing Paul’s death as imminent, but he, like Prior, questions the testament classification. Johnson explains that elements associated with the testament are discernible in the letter; however, the decision to regard 2 Timothy as a farewell discourse should be questioned on the basis of two considerations. First, many elements in 2 Timothy do not fit the testament genre. Johnson points especially to the fact that the attention given to opponents in the letter is far more explicit than is customary among testaments. Second, Johnson suggests that another genre fits the literary self-presentation better: “the personal paraenetic letter.” According to Johnson, a paraenetic letter is composed of exhortation that encourages certain actions, while discouraging other actions. Throughout 2 Timothy, Johnson sees Paul holding himself out as a positive example, encouraging Timothy to take appropriate action, while at the same time highlighting the negative aspects of the opponents, thus portraying “in vivid colors that which should be avoided.” Therefore, he concludes that 2 Timothy has the general form of a personal paraenetic letter.

With Johnson, I conclude that it is an error to classify 2 Timothy as a testament. Mark Mathews, in his recent study of the genre of 2 Peter, neatly summarizes the elements of testamentary literature. With regard to form, Mathews reports that testamentary literature always refers to an ancient figure of great importance. He also reports that each testament begins with and is cast within a third-person narrative. With regard to content, Mathews claims that six basic elements are contained within each testament: 1) a deathbed scene, 2) moral exhortations, 3) predictions of the future, 4) the

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57 Ibid., 322.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., 324.

60 Marshall (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 12) and Towner (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 36) classify 2 Timothy as a personal paraenetic letter as well. Like Johnson, Towner explains that the ongoing interaction with opponents is Paul’s way of contrasting “his own exemplary model of faithfulness and orthodoxy with the godless beliefs and behavior of the opponents. This element then functions in concert with the paraenetic element to underline the distinctions between right and wrong, godly and godless, in a way that guides Timothy in what he is to pursue and avoid.”

death of the prominent figure, 5) burial, and 6) lamentation of the followers.\textsuperscript{62} Second Timothy, then, cannot be called a testament; it is not a third-person narrative, there is no circling around Paul’s deathbed, Paul’s death is not recorded, and thus there is no burial and lamentation.

The personal paraenetic classification, on the other hand, fits the letter fairly well. According to Stanley Stowers, paraenetic letters required some type of positive relationship, and it was customary for the writer to liken himself to a father exhorting his child.\textsuperscript{63} Additionally, the goal of paraenetic letters was not to teach anything that was essentially new; these letters were written to those who had already been initiated into a certain group and needed to “habituate the initial learning.”\textsuperscript{64} Finally, a fundamental element of this type of letter was the recommendation of “habits of behavior and actions that conform to a certain model of character and attempts to turn the recipient away from contrasting negative models of character.”\textsuperscript{65} Second Timothy is full of reminders for Paul’s beloved child; Timothy is to recall and continue in the things he has already learned. Moreover, Paul functions as the positive example for his delegate throughout the discourse, while the opponents exemplify ungodliness. Thus, it seems that 2 Timothy possesses the essential features of the personal paraenetic letter. But there is a uniqueness associated with 2 Timothy that we do not capture if we merely refer to the writing as a personal paraenetic letter. Second Timothy is the only canonical letter that makes reference to the imminent death of Paul. The evanescence of Paul’s life heightens the exhortation of the letter, making 2 Timothy distinct in its solemnity.

E. The Purpose, Motif, and Basic Structure of 2 Timothy

Paul’s reason for writing 2 Timothy is most clearly expressed in two passages: 2:1-7 and 4:9-21. The bookends of the closing, 4:9 and 4:21, reveal that Paul longed to be reunited with Timothy. If the letter is authentic, these verses seem to indicate that Paul wanted Timothy to transition to a new place of ministry. There is no suggestion in 2 Timothy of any difference of location with respect to Timothy’s ministry. Since he was situated in Ephesus when Paul sent 1 Timothy, and since Paul specifically instructed him

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 59. See also the helpful discussion in Smith, \textit{Timothy’s Task, Paul’s Prospect}, 75-89. Smith rightly concludes that, though there may be some shared content between the testament and 2 Timothy, it is clear that 2 Timothy does not follow the structure of the testament.


\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 96.
to remain there, it is most reasonable to think that Timothy was still in Ephesus when Paul penned this second letter to him. But it seems best to conclude that the sending/receiving of 2 Timothy marked the beginning of the end of Timothy’s assignment in Ephesus. Paul probably would not have called for Timothy to journey to see him (in Rome?) to then send his delegate back to Ephesus. Additionally, 4:12 could be an indication that Tychicus had been appointed as Timothy’s replacement in Ephesus.\footnote{Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 591, declares with certainty that Tychicus was Timothy’s replacement, even providing an explanation of why he was the natural choice for the task. See also Smith, Timothy’s Task, Paul’s Prospect, 223-225, who states that when Tychichus comes, Timothy is to pass the baton of ministry to him. Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 627, exercises more restraint: “We may assume that Tychicus was sent on apostolic business,” and that his relocation to Ephesus “is a movement that apparently had some relevance to Timothy, even if we cannot be precisely sure what the relevance was.”} If the letter is pseudonymous, this final section is “a typical feature of hellenistic letters that has been creatively employed by the author to give concrete shape and a Pauline stamp to his theological message.”\footnote{Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 175. Bassler, however, acknowledges the difficulty of the final section of the letter for proponents of the pseudonymous view.}

Second Timothy 2:1-7 makes it clear that Timothy was not to relinquish his post in Ephesus without first ensuring that the Christian community would continue to combat the false teachers and persist in gospel proclamation. Just as Paul had entrusted \(\pi\alpha\varphi\tau\iota\iota\iota\nu\iota\mu\iota\) Timothy with the task of correcting false teachers in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:18), so Timothy was to entrust \(\pi\alpha\varphi\tau\iota\iota\iota\nu\iota\mu\iota\) the healthy teaching to faithful people who would resolve to teach the truth, even long after Timothy had left the city (2 Tim 2:2).\footnote{With Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 408, 726–727.} Paul knew that as the young delegate finished his assignment in Ephesus, and as he moved on to his next appointment, he would need encouragement; thus, much of the letter is personal exhortation—a call for Timothy to endure the difficult work of ministry.\footnote{Similarly, Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 13–14.} Paul provides three images in 2:1-7—the steady soldier (vv. 3-4), the honest athlete (v. 5), and the toiling farmer (v. 6)—to emphasize that ministry is grueling work. This theme
surfaces throughout the letter.\textsuperscript{70} We may say, then, that the motif of 2 Timothy is \textit{faithfully enduring the difficulties of gospel ministry}.\textsuperscript{71}

The body of 2 Timothy may be divided into three blocks: 1:3-2:13; 2:14-3:9; 3:10-4:8. In the first and the final block, Paul calls for Timothy to hold fast to the healthy teaching and to endure the work of ministry, just as he himself has done. In between these two blocks, Paul warns Timothy of those who oppose the truth. Where Timothy is to follow the pattern of healthy teaching Paul has set before him, he is to distance himself from the empty talk of the opponents. The following outline reflects the movement of the letter body.

Paul and Timothy: The Difficulties of Ministry (1:3-2:13)
Timothy and the Opponents (2:14-3:9)
Paul and Timothy: Fulfill Your Ministry (3:10-4:8)\textsuperscript{72}

F. The Polemical Portions of the Letters

Both 1 and 2 Timothy contain strongly critical remarks concerning the opponents in Ephesus. One of the primary reasons, I suspect, that thorough exegetical studies of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy are scarce is because of the notion, fairly common among NT scholars, that the author’s style of argumentation does not permit a clear determination of the nature and extent of the threat the false teachers posed. Jouette Bassler, for example, writes, “Only rarely does [the author] offer even a glimpse of the content of [the opponents’] message. Instead he engages primarily in name-calling and even then relies on stereotypical accusations deriving from the conventional attacks leveled by contemporary philosophers against their rivals, the sophists or rhetoricians.”\textsuperscript{73}

Readings of this ilk stem from Robert Karris’ seminal article, “The Background and

\textsuperscript{70} Van Neste, \textit{Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles}, 218, finds over twenty references to suffering, bondage, endurance, abandonment, and persecution in the letter.

\textsuperscript{71} With Johnson, \textit{The First and Second Letters to Timothy}, 327; Mounce, \textit{Pastoral Epistles}, 474. Johnson notes, “At the heart of Paul’s conception of Timothy’s ministry is a call to endurance and suffering.” Mounce explains, “The theme of suffering ties almost all of the epistle together.”

\textsuperscript{72} It is ironic that so short an epistle has yielded such a confusing range of structural analyses. Marshall, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 33–40, gathers no less than seven suggested outlines of the letter. The structure suggested here differs only slightly from that of Van Neste, \textit{Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles}, 194–233, and that of Westfall, “A Moral Dilemma?,” 231–252.

\textsuperscript{73} Bassler, \textit{I Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus}, 25. Fatum, “Christ Domesticated,” 186, says, “The more menacing the adversaries are made to appear, the more certain the author may be of the compliance of his addressees.”
Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles.” Karris claims that, where the genuine Paul aids the interpreter in his or her quest for information about opponents, the author of the PD often employs hackneyed labels that provide no specific data about the adversaries in Ephesus. Karris contends that the author of the PD employs a schema, which is traditional to the polemic of philosophers against the sophists. He defines a schema as “the convergence of items that regularly occur in the presentation of a particular topic.” Karris argues that a number of the criticisms contained in the PD (e.g., the opponents are greedy, deceptive, argumentative) are components of the schema. Therefore, in Karris’ judgment, it is “extremely difficult to infer from the polemic the nature of the opponents’ teachings.” He concludes that the parallels between the PD and the philosophical writings “demonstrate the ‘stock’ character of the polemic of the


75 Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 551. See also Johnson, “II Timothy and the Polemic Against False Teachers,” 1–4; idem, “The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic,” JBL 108 (1989): 430–432, who argues that, in Hellenistic rhetoric, charges against opponents became standardized and formed a topos. He writes, “Certain things are conventionally said of all opponents. Their teaching was self-contradictory, or trivial, or it led to bad morals. Their behavior could be criticized in several ways. Either they preached but did not practice (in which case they were hypocrites), or they lived as they taught and their corrupt lives showed how bad their doctrine was (like the Epicureans). Certain standard categories of vice were automatically attributed to any opponent. They were all lovers of pleasure, lovers of money, and lovers of glory” (432).

76 Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 551n10.

77 Ibid., 552–554. See also Andrie Du Toit, “Vilification as a Pragmatic Device in Early Christian Epistolography,” in Focusing on Paul: Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and David S. du Toit (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 45–56, who argues that ancient authors routinely referred to their adversaries as hypocrites, sorcerers, defilers, and instigators of spiritual turmoil.

78 Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 550.
Pastorals and caution one to separate the ‘stock’ charges from the charges that reflect the actual situation.”

As I see it, there are at least four problems with Karris’ proposal. One of his reasons for determining that the polemic of the PD is fundamentally different from the polemic contained in the undisputed Pauline letters is that the author of the PD does not “pick up [the opponents’] terms and turn them to his own advantage as the Paul of the indisputably genuine letters does.” Here Karris implies that the consensus among NT scholars is that the undisputed Paul actually employs the same terms as his opponents. There is no such consensus. The lack of agreement is due to the fragile chain of assumptions on which such an assertion must be based: that the interpreter can spot the places where Paul echoes his opponents’ language, that Paul knew the precise terms the opponents used, and that Paul was willing to re-use their terms. Another problem with Karris’ proposal is that he cannot provide a satisfactory solution to the question: Why would the author of the PD employ the schema of philosophers against sophists? Karris claims that the author employs this schema to cause aversion for the opponents and “to show that he alone has the right to and actually does impart the truth.” The problem with this conclusion, as Johnson points out, is that it does not correspond to the literary shape of the PD. As I hope to have demonstrated above, the first addressee of the letters is a leader of the early Christian community (and the same is true for Titus). The author has no need to convince this first addressee of his spiritual authority. Thus, there is no reason to think the author used the polemic as a device to this end.

A third problem with Karris’ argument is that he gives too much weight to individual words that occur in both the PD and the philosophical writings (e.g., “myths,” “deceivers”). More attention must be given to the context in which these terms are used.

79 Ibid., 556–557n30.
80 Ibid., 562.
82 Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 563.
83 Johnson, “II Timothy and the Polemic Against False Teachers,” 4. Johnson argues that the stereotypical polemical language (especially in 2 Timothy) “has the function within a paraenetic framework of providing a contrast to the ideal Christian teacher” (25). Unfortunately, Johnson (like Karris) fails to notice certain places where it seems that the author of the PD adapts elements of the stereotyped topos, though he in many instances remedies this problem in his commentary. See, for example, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 297, where in his discussion of the accusation of greed (1 Tim 6:5) he finds signs “that something more than stereotypical slander is at work.”
As Samuel Sandmel reminds us, “Detailed study is the criterion, and the detailed study ought to respect the context and not be limited to juxtaposing mere excerpts. Two passages may sound the same in splendid isolation from their context, but when seen in context reflect difference rather than similarity.”84 If we carefully examine the contexts in which the various components of Karris’ schema (e.g., greed, deception, quibbling) occur in the PD, we will discover that, even if Paul borrowed “stock” forms, he often molded them to fit the actual situation.85 For example, I endeavor to show in the following chapter that there is good reason to think that the accusation of greed in 1 Tim 6:5 is substantial. Both the immediate context and the concern for a proper view of material possessions that surfaces throughout the letter make this the most likely interpretation of 1 Tim 6:5.

Related to the issue of verbal correspondence is the problem of Karris’ definition of a schema. Karris apparently fails to realize that a schema, at least as he defines it, ceases to be a schema when a new community is introduced.86 In other words, it is unreasonable simply to assume that a secular philosopher and an early Christian writer will use a set of terms or phrases in the exact same way.87 To make such an assumption is to disregard the distinctive features of the Christian community.88 Different groups often employ the same words and phrases in different ways.

It may be the case, then, that in 1 and 2 Timothy Paul modifies the polemical customs. It has been sufficiently demonstrated that Paul was in no way straitjacketed by

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86 I suggest the problem could be avoided by adding an important prepositional phrase to Karris’ definition of schema: “the convergence of items that regularly occur in the presentation of a particular topic by a particular community.”
87 Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents*, 90-91, rightly argues that more than verbal correspondence is needed to suggest similarity or identity of ideas in writings composed by different authors, especially when one author is within the Christian movement and one is not.
88 For example, Jerry L. Sumney, “Paul’s Use of Πάθος in His Argument Against the Opponents of 2 Corinthians,” in *Paul and Pathos*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 159, suggests that a recognition of the fact that Paul draws on widely known and practiced conventions of argument should help the interpreter spot “those places where his theology makes him stand back from these conventional practices.” Du Toit, “Vilification as a Pragmatic Device in Early Christian Epistolography,” 54, mentions “the constraints of Christian ethical standards.”
first-century conventions. Paul freely and effectively played with the elements of ancient epistolary style, and, according to Stowers, his modifications “set the earliest Christian letters apart as the products of a unique religious community.” Therefore, in this study I will not simply assume that Paul adopts what Karris refers to as the schema of the philosophers against the sophists. I will carefully examine the context in which each element of Karris’ schema occurs, always leaving room for the possibility that Paul uses language from the wider world of discourse for his own purposes (i.e., adaptation).

A few final words should be said about the way I will approach the polemical parts of the letters that do not contain alleged stereotypical language. Even these portions of 1 and 2 Timothy will be thorny, for we must be alert to the very real possibility of exaggeration. My presupposition is that Paul did not misinterpret the situation he addressed, nor did he misrepresent the opponents. A stance that opposes Paul’s teaching and finds in the opponents’ position a more positive or emancipatory theology is, in my view, incompatible with a Christian reading of Holy Scripture. To suggest that Paul provides an altogether false account of his adversaries is equally problematic. In his discussion of the polemic of Galatians, John Barclay argues that it is illogical to think that Paul could have wholly misrepresented his opponents and their message. Barclay explains: “If he was attempting to persuade the Galatians to abandon the ‘other gospel’, what he says about it must have been both recognizable and plausible in their ears. Thus the letter is likely to reflect fairly accurately what Paul saw to be the main points at

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91 With Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 37; Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents*, 97: “In the heat of battle, exaggerations are likely, even usual.”

92 Jouette M. Bassler, “Limits and Differentiation: The Calculus of Widows in 1 Timothy 5.3-16,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Deutero-Pauline Epistles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Bickenstaff (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 122, states her position plainly: “I am guided by the presupposition that the letter does not necessarily represent how things actually were in the church.” I am guided by an opposite presupposition.
Throughout this study, I will trust Paul’s basic assessment of the opponents. This does not mean, however, that I will take all of Paul’s polemical statements at face value. Paul does at times provide us with an inflated image of his adversaries. But even in these cases of polemical hyperbole we find a reliable core, because hyperbole is always the exaggeration of truth.

II. Analyzing the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy

Thus far I have argued that we are dealing with two types of letter, both dispatched in the first century to the Christian community in Ephesus, each addressing in a unique way a stage of the conflict in which the community was engaged. I have also maintained that the polemical parts of the letters can be mined for specific information about the opponents in Ephesus. We need now to formulate a stringent method for our study of these opponents. Many scholars who have written on the opponents of the early Christians have either entirely overlooked or have given only a passing glance to the issue of method, though a handful of scholars have made important contributions. Some of the most substantial contributions will be summarized below. While I will borrow and

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94 Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents*, 97, asserts that even in cases of polemical hyperbole we may still “discover the kinds of issues the opponents raise.”

95 See, for example, R. McL. Wilson, “How Gnostic Were the Corinthians?,” *NTS* 19 (1972): 65–74. Wilson mentions, en passant, the danger of “reading back, of interpreting first-century documents in the light of second-century texts,” and hints at the need for a better method, but he does not develop one (68). More recently, see King, “Expository Preaching as a Means to Fulfill Paul’s Mandate in the Pastoral Epistles to Confront and Correct False Teaching,” 4–7, who writes, “The texts chosen for exegesis contain the most pertinent information regarding false teachers” (7). But King provides no argument for the selection of certain texts and the exclusion of others.

apply many of the principles from these previously constructed methods in the current study, I hope here to elucidate some of the problems associated with the standard historical-critical approach to the study of opponents. In my view, we do not need to replace all the methodological steppingstones, but we do need to redirect the path.

A. Gathering Principles: A Survey of Previous Methods for Identifying Opponents

1. Nils Dahl (1967)

Dahl was perhaps the first scholar to call attention to the need for a strict method when attempting to identify the opponents and reconstruct the conflict reflected in a NT letter.97 In his work, “Paul and the Church at Corinth According to 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21,” Dahl explains that, though there is “a wide negative agreement that in 1 Corinthians Paul is not opposing Judaizers, there is no consensus with regard to the background and nature of the controversies.”98 For Dahl, the adoption of a rigid method is the only way to break through this deadlock. His method for identifying the opponents in 1 Corinthians consists of five basic principles, four of which have implications for our study. First, the interpreter must recognize that Paul wrote the letter in the midst of a controversy, and he described the controversy from his own perspective. Second, any reconstruction of the background of 1 Cor 1-4 must be based on the information contained within the section itself. Third, all information from other Pauline epistles, Acts, and other contemporary sources must be set aside “until the epistolary situation has been clarified as far as possible on the basis of internal evidence.”99 Fourth, any reconstruction of the background must be understood as a reasonable hypothesis at best, and the hypothesis will gain credibility as it accounts for “the total argument and all details within 1 Cor 1-4 with a minimal dependence upon hypothetical inferences derived from extraneous sources.”100 Though simplistic, Dahl’s method establishes a fairly solid foundation. The greatest strength of his method is that priority is given to the primary text.

2. Joseph Tyson (1968)

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98 Ibid.
99 Ibid., 318.
100 Ibid. Dahl lists a fifth principle that deals with the relationship between 1 Cor 1-4 and 1 Cor 5-16. Since this principle is not applicable to 1 and 2 Timothy, I have opted to omit it.
In his work, “Paul’s Opponents in Galatia,” Tyson begins by pointing out the different conclusions about opponents reached by equally able scholars. He then swiftly concludes: “A clear methodology is a prime necessity.” Tyson’s method is fourfold. As a starting point, interpreters must limit themselves to the internal evidence of the primary text. Tyson seems to agree with Dahl on this point, but his explanation of this first principle is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, he declares: “The letter to the Galatians must be our only source for solving the problem of its own occasion.” On the other hand, he suggests that the Pauline corpus may be used in supplementary fashion. Tyson’s second principle is more clearly expressed: interpreters must analyze the primary text, attempting to identify any statements that might be understood as answers to specific charges or problems. After these passages have been identified, interpreters are free to use Paul’s defense as a basis for determining the specific charges made by the opponents. Tyson argues: “In most cases, the charge can be seen by taking the negative of the defense.” The final stage in Tyson’s method is the search for the source of the charges. His methodology, then, is one that moves in reverse: “It attempts to work from the defenses to the charges to the source of the charges.”

Following Dahl, Tyson rightly emphasizes the role of the primary text. However, Tyson’s negative replica principle is flawed. He wrongly asserts that the interpreter can gain access to the opponents’ teaching by assuming the exact opposite of the defensive statements of the letter. This assertion does not account for the range of possible images that mirror-reading inevitably produces (discussed further below).

3. C.J.A. Hickling (1975)

Unlike Dahl and Tyson, Hickling does not formulate a full method for identifying opponents; however, his work is important because of the warning he issues to those who seek to interpret polemical writings. Hickling, in his brief article on 2 Corinthians, takes issue with the facile method used by a number of interpreters. He summarizes their argument as follows. “Since Paul’s letters were written almost exclusively to deal with specific situations, it is possible to reconstruct these situations in detail by a sufficiently

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102 Ibid., 242.
103 Ibid., 243.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., 244.
106 Ibid.
careful attention to his language. Choice of vocabulary, ironic allusion, even quotations which may be isolated on the basis of style and hapax legomena, make it possible to ‘read off,’ as in a non-distorting mirror, the ethical and doctrinal position of Paul’s opponents.”

According to Hickling, this approach dangerously assumes that “Paul preferred to conduct his polemic against his adversaries by meeting them largely or even exclusively on their own ground, and in a somewhat slavish way at that.”

Hickling claims that the Pauline epistles should not be read as if Paul’s opponents dictated his subjects and phraseology. Severely limiting the lexical clues that might help interpreters identify the opponents, Hickling concludes: “It may be, then, that we must be content to remain largely in ignorance of the doctrinal position or tendencies of Paul’s rivals.”

Hickling rightly warns interpreters about the danger of assuming that Paul’s words have been plucked from the jargon of the opponents; however, in my view, Hickling goes too far when he claims that opponents do not dictate Paul’s subjects or themes. If we are dealing with situational documents, and if the situation of a Christian community clearly involved opposition, then it is right to presume that the content of the epistle would have been at least partially determined by the turmoil in the community. At least some subjects of the letter must be understood as a response to the opponents. The question, then, is: How do we determine which subjects are intended to be answers to the adversaries?

Barclay begins his important article, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case,” by pointing out the high number of NT letters that are steeped in polemics. He notes: “In most cases we have no independent witness to the arguments of those under attack in the New Testament; our only access to their thoughts and identities is via the very documents which oppose them. Hence the necessity for one of the most difficult and delicate of all New Testament critical methods: we must use the text which answers the opponents as a mirror in which we can see reflected the people and the arguments under attack.”

For Barclay, mirror-reading is an essential but

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108 Ibid., 284.
109 Ibid., 285.
110 Ibid., 287.
111 Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter,” 73.
112 Ibid., 73–74. Not all would agree with Barclay on this point. Some scholars have discarded mirror-reading, calling it a dubious method. See, for example, George Lyons, Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding, SBLDS 73 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 96. Lyons rather forcefully claims, “[Mirror-reading] is an inappropriate, if not entirely fallacious, method for identifying either Paul’s opponents or
extremely complex endeavor. “It is a good deal more difficult than is usually acknowledged, but not wholly impossible. What is needed is a carefully controlled method of working which uses logical criteria and proceeds with suitable caution.”

Barclay devotes a large portion of his article to a discussion of the obstacles one encounters when attempting to mirror-read a polemical text. It is only in the final part of the article that he takes up the task of charting a safe course. In his concluding sections, he offers seven methodological suggestions. First, the interpreter must pay attention to the type of utterance and recognize that each type of utterance is open to a range of mirror-images. For example, if Paul issues a command, then we may assume that, at least, those who receive it are in danger of neglecting what is commanded, and at most, they are already openly disregarding it (or the condition may be anywhere between these two poles). This approach is to be preferred over Tyson’s approach of assuming the direct opposite of the defensive statements of the letter. Second, the interpreter must note the tone of statements within the letter. If Paul issues a statement with emphasis, we may conclude that this is a central issue. Third, frequency of words and themes is a good indicator of what is truly important in Paul’s argument against the opponents. Fourth, mirror-reading should be restricted to passages that are reasonably clear. Portions of the letter that contain ambiguous language should not hold a primary place in an interpreter’s hypothesis. Fifth, unfamiliar language, language not used elsewhere in the Pauline letters, or used very little, may be a reflection of a particular feature of the opponents. Sixth, unless there is strong evidence to suggest otherwise, we should assume that Paul is responding to a single group of opponents. Finally, and only after all the aforementioned matters have been carefully considered, the interpreter may begin searching for historically plausible contemporary people and movements which could be the object of Paul’s rebuke.

A number of Barclay’s methodological suggestions are helpful. His first observation concerning range in mirror-reading is especially important. However, his

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113 Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter,” 84.
114 Ibid., 84–85.
115 Nijay K. Gupta, “Mirror-Reading Moral Issues in Paul’s Letters,” *JSNT* 34 (2012): 361–381, demonstrates the forcefulness of Barclay’s argument as a whole. He also points to a number of notable scholars who have employed Barclay’s method.
second suggestion, paying attention to *tone*, seems to be too subjective. What appears to be issued with emphasis to one interpreter may appear to be issued in a rather ordinary fashion to another. Additionally, Barclay’s comments about the frequency of words or themes can be refined. It is best to look for *repetition*, that is, key words, phrases, or themes found in the portions of the letter where the opponents are clearly in view that resurface elsewhere in the letter. This is the most reliable piece of evidence that the opponents are once again on Paul’s radar.


By far the most substantial method for identifying opponents is found in Sumney’s monographs: *Identifying Paul’s Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians* and “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and *Other Opponents of Paul*. Sumney begins by arguing that only sources roughly contemporary with the primary text may be used for historical reconstructions. Using later writings to reconstruct an earlier period faces a number of methodological problems. The most general of these problems is anachronism, a fault procedure in all fields of history. Sumney also suggests that identifying opponents of one region from documents produced in and for another region is problematic. An appreciation of the important distinctions of time and space must be maintained. Sumney concludes: “The problems involving anachronism show clearly that we must reject the direct use (and some less direct uses) of later materials as sources for reconstructing the history of the first-century church, especially when the reconstruction is so precise that it supplies details of a particular situation. Since the canons of critical historical research prohibit this use of later texts, we are left with only contemporary sources; sound historical method will admit no others.” Having identified what he considers to be the proper sources for historical reconstructions, Sumney turns to the

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appropriate function of a reconstruction. Following Dahl, Sumney insists that a
reconstruction can only present a possibility—never more.\footnote{Ibid.} “\textit{Probability} must be
established from work on the primary document, which does not presuppose the
reconstruction.”\footnote{Ibid., 81, emphasis added.}

Next, Sumney turns his attention to the identification of parallel passages.
Interpreters often use parallels—passages from other Pauline writings and/or non-Pauline
writings that employ similar terminology—to help identify the opponents in the primary
text. Sumney contends that there is an appropriate way to recognize and employ parallels,
but he argues that it is never appropriate to search merely for verbal similarity. Since
words have different meanings over time and in different communities, verbal
correspondence is insufficient evidence.\footnote{Ibid., 90.} Context determines a true parallel. But even
true parallels, according to Sumney, do nothing more than present an analogy, so they
cannot establish \textit{probability}.\footnote{Ibid., 93-94.}

The thesis of Sumney’s methodological argument is that, since reconstructions
and parallels cannot present probabilities, the interpreter must give priority to the primary
text: “The letter under consideration itself is the only primary evidence for its
opponents.”\footnote{Ibid., “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 23.} Thus, Sumney provides a detailed discussion of what he considers to be
the parts of a letter that are most relevant for identifying opponents. He evaluates
passages within the primary text in two ways: with respect to certainty of reference and
with respect to reliability.\footnote{Sumney, \textit{Identifying Paul’s Opponents}, 95-113; idem, \textit{“Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul}, 23-29.} Sumney distinguishes between explicit statements about the
opponents, probable allusions to them, and affirmations that may or may not be intended
to combat them. He further argues that the context (e.g., polemical, apologetic, didactic)
in which a statement appears helps the interpreter determine reliability. The following
chart lists hierarchically the parts of the primary text Sumney analyzes.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textbf{Certainty of Reference} \\
\textit{Level 1} \\
Explicit statements in all contexts \\
\textit{Level 2} \\
Allusions in Polemical contexts (which do not require mirror-reading)
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
Allusions in Apologetic contexts
Level 3
Allusions in Polemical contexts (which do require mirror-reading)
Affirmations in Polemical contexts
Allusions in Thanksgiving periods
Level 4
Main themes in Extended Greetings and Thanksgiving Periods
Level 5
Individual non-explicit statements in Greetings
Individual affirmations in Thanksgiving periods
Non-explicit statements in Epistolary closings and Hortatory contexts
Affirmations in Didactic contexts

Reliability
Level 1
Explicit statements and allusions in Didactic contexts
Explicit statements, allusions, and major themes in Thanksgiving periods
Major themes in Greetings
Affirmations in Apologetic contexts
Affirmations in Polemical contexts
Level 2
Explicit statements and allusions in Apologetic contexts
Allusions in Polemical contexts
Explicit statements in Polemical contexts and Epistolary Greetings and Closings
Level 3
Explicit statements in Hortatory contexts

The method I propose below will bear some resemblance to Sumney’s method. I find many of his methodological principles to be sound. It does seem, however, that Sumney is both too lenient with regard to the type of passage that can be examined and too restrictive with regard to the data that can be uncovered in polemical contexts. I will attempt to correct these slight deficiencies when constructing the method I will use in the present study.

B. Critiquing the Procedure: Problems Associated with the Standard Historical-Critical Approach

Having considered the methodological principles introduced by Dahl, Tyson, Hickling, Barclay, and Sumney, I will now appraise the overall procedure for the study of Paul’s opponents. In the study of opponents, the pendulum of method has been long-lodged on the historical-critical side. Virtually all scholars interested in the investigation

\[\text{For similar charts, see Sumney, Identifying Paul’s Opponents, 113; idem, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 29. According to Sumney, information from the lowest level in the certainty column cannot be used at all in the identification of opponents.}\]
of Paul’s opponents presuppose that the aim of such study is to clarify the historical context of Paul’s letters. Each scholar surveyed above seeks to curb this historical endeavor, which typically is thought of as a threefold procedure. First, the interpreter hopes to examine carefully the primary text. Second, he or she searches for antecedents, influences, or parallels in other sources that will establish a connection between the opponents reflected in the primary text and some notorious group in antiquity. It is thought that such a connection will open up a stream of supplementary data so the interpreter can, third, offer a more complete reconstruction of the conflict in which Paul and the early Christian community were engaged. I hope to demonstrate that, while many of the principles that compose this procedure are sound, the procedure itself is in some ways defective. Again, we do not need to replace all the methodological steppingstones, but we do need to redirect the path. I have three objections to the standard historical-critical approach. First, the designations the standard approach yields do not actually clarify anything. Second, identifications/historical reconstructions often skew the reading of the primary text. Third, since the standard procedure is implemented for the purpose of procuring historical details, the findings usually are irrelevant to the church.

1. A Nomenclatural Objection: The Designations the Standard Approach Yields Do Not Actually Clarify Anything

As stated previously, Gunther collects nineteen possible identifications of the opponents in the PD, and his list is by no means comprehensive.

   Jews
   Jews influenced by oriental philosophy
   Gnosticizing Jews
   Jewish-syncretistic Gnostics
   Judaizing incipient Gnostics
   Proto-Montanists
   Cerinthians
   Incipient Gnostics
   Gnosticizing enthusiasts despising the natural order of creation
   Early Valentinian Ophites
   Naassenes
   Marcionites influenced by Valentinianism
   Marcion
   Antinomian Jewish Christian Gnostic pneumatics
   Jewish Christians influenced by Hellenistic speculations
   Various unidentifiable Gnosticizing types

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126 Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents*, 9: “As most scholars recognize, the more we know about Paul’s opponents, the more we will know about the historical context of his letters, and therefore, about the meaning of those letters.”
Jewish Christian antinomians and oriental ascetics
Gentile Gnostic Docetists and Judaizers
Pharisaic Judaizers and Gnostic spiritualists

Laying aside the obviously confusing conglomerations, such as “Antinomian Jewish Christian Gnostic pneumatics,” let us consider what, if anything, we gain from identifying Paul’s opponents as “Gnostics” or as “Incipient Gnostics.” In his influential work, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, Michael Williams explains that what is today usually called “Gnosticism” includes “a variegated assortment of religious movements.” Furthermore, he suggests that the term “Gnosticism” in modern discourse has all but lost “any reliably identifiable meaning for the larger reading public” and “there is no true consensus even among specialists in the religions of the Greco-Roman world on a definition of the category.” Karen King emphasizes the ubiquity of the term, “Gnosticism.” She writes, “The term is used so widely and in so many different senses that its precise meaning in any given case is often hard to discern… It has been connected with Buddhism, nihilism, and modern movements such as progressivism, positivism, Hegelianism, and Marxism.” More recently, David Brakke, following Williams, has argued that “Gnosticism” has become meaningless by saying both too much and too little. “It includes under its umbrella people and texts that are far too many and far too diverse, and therefore it provides no real understanding of them.”

I fear we fare no better by labeling the opponents “Jewish” or “Jewish Christian.” Since E.P. Sanders’ effort to sum up Palestinian Judaism in the phrase “covenantal nomism,” many scholars have made claims of reductionism. D.A. Carson concludes:

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129 Ibid., 4. Birger A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 8, agrees that there is a good deal of confusion as to what the term is supposed to mean, though he thinks there is some utility in retaining the label. For a survey of recent scholarship on “Gnosticism” as a category, see David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 19-28.
“The literature of Second Temple Judaism reflects patterns of belief and religion too diverse to subsume under one label.”\textsuperscript{133} Carson contends that Sanders’ approach of “deploying one neat formula across literature so diverse engenders an assumption that there is more uniformity in the literature than there is.”\textsuperscript{134} In his study of Paul and the law, Frank Thielman urges interpreters to think of different \textit{strands} of Judaism. “Paul was aware that \textit{some} Jews believed in a cooperation between human effort and God’s grace as the means for obtaining acquittal on the final day. He himself had once believed this… Nevertheless, the way Paul argues about the law with Jews and those under their influence shows that he did not regard \textit{all} Jews as legalists or Judaism generally as a legalistic religion.”\textsuperscript{135} I have no desire to enter into the discussion of the New Perspective; I simply wish to highlight some of the problems associated with the labels the standard historical-critical procedure yields. If there were multiple strands of Judaism in the first century, it does not suffice to say that the opponents in the PD were “Jewish.”

The label “Jewish Christian” is just as obscure. King explains that “Jewish Christianity” can refer to any of the following: 1) Christianity as a variant type of Judaism, 2) ethnic Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, 3) Christians who maintained some Jewish practices, 4) first-century members of the Jerusalem church who may have fled to Pella during the war with Rome, 5) the influence of Jewish concepts and texts, including the acceptance of the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures, 6) an adoptionist Christology (maintaining that Jesus was only a human being “adopted” by God), 7) a denigration of Paul in favor of Peter or James, and 8) the exclusive use of Matthew’s gospel. She concludes, “These items refer variously to ethnicity, religious beliefs or practices, historical events, sectarian groups, and literary or hermeneutical practices, which covenantal nomism is maintained from early in the second century b.c.e. to late in the second century c.e., it must be hypothesized that covenantal nomism was \textit{pervasive} in Palestine before 70. It was thus the basic \textit{type} of religion known by Jesus and presumably by Paul” (emphasis original).


\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 544.

making ‘Jewish Christianity’ a particularly exasperating case of classificatory imprecision.”

In my estimation, we do nothing to clarify the conflict reflected in a NT letter when we place the opponents in contested categories (“Gnosticism”), suggest a link to some ambiguous ideological descendent (“proto-Gnostic”), or employ imprecise labels (“Jewish/Jewish Christian”). And there is certainly nothing to be gained from confused mixtures, such as “a gnostic form of Jewish Christianity which reflects characteristics of the Artemis cult.” The first problem we must come to terms with is that identifications like this do not clarify anything at all.

2. A Hermeneutical Objection: Identifications and Historical Reconstructions Often Skew the Reading of the Primary Text

A second issue is the interpretive danger inevitably associated with identifications and historical reconstructions. We must not underestimate this danger. Once an interpreter identifies the opponents of a letter as “Gnostics,” for example, and subsequently peruses the “Gnostic” sources, it is very difficult for the interpreter to return to the primary text as anything other than a hobbler in need of his or her reconstruction crutch. Suddenly “Gnostics” appear everywhere in the letter. Sumney strongly critiques scholars who allow their reconstructions to control their exegesis of the primary text, though he rather tentatively allows for the use of reconstructions. He argues: “At [the] final step we may use a reconstruction to link the opponents of a letter with an identifiable group (for example, Judaizers). But even here we must not import characteristics for the opponents which are not warranted by the particular letter.”

This is easier said than done.

Goulder provides us with a case study in how reconstructions control exegesis. In his article, “The Pastor’s Wolves: Jewish Christian Visionaries behind the Pastoral Epistles,” Goulder contends that the Pastoral Epistles offer us a glimpse of a Gnostic movement that emerged from within Judaism. He reconstructs the conflict as follows.

The wolves are Jewish Christians, and they are, as we should expect, keen to press the Law and its traditional interpretations on the Pastor’s Gentile congregations. But they are not “normative” Jews. They are members of a

charismatic Christian movement, with a key element the claim to visions of God and his court. Their visionaries have seen the Throne, and have dilated upon the aeons, the extensions of God, to such an extent that the Pastor can imply that they are polytheists. They have traced the relationship between these aeons in a proto-gnostic myth which seems to be similar to the first part of the Barbeliot myth; and they used the word γνώσις of their experiences. The driving force behind these visions was in part the traditional Ezekiel-Enoch type aspiration to pierce the firmament; and in part it was the quest for a Christology. As with the Barbeliots, one of the primary aeons was called Christ; and as with the Ebionites, he had been quite distinct from the human Jesus, and had possessed him only from the baptism to the crucifixion. So that is why the Pastor is so indignant and contemptuous; and why he so often urges Timothy and Titus to rebuke his opponents sharply.  

For Goulder, the opponents’ Christology is the Pastor’s chief concern: “To the Pastor Christ-Jesus was a single divine being who appeared in flesh; to his opponents Christ was a divine aeon who took possession of the human Jesus for a period.”  

Goulder claims that on numerous occasions the author combats the incarnation-denying position of the opponents. In his comments on 1 Tim 2:5, for example, Goulder suggests: “There was only one intermediary who had brought us salvation, and he was human, ἄνθρωπος, the divine Christ-Jesus incarnate. The unexpressed antithesis is the Cerinthus doctrine: Christ was a heavenly spirit and not a man, distinct from and superior to the human Jesus.” Additionally, Goulder claims the phrase ὄφθη ἄγγελοις (1 Tim 3:16) is intended to combat the opponents. Their gospel was about “a multitude of heavenly beings, aeons, connected in genealogies by myths and known by visions” and the Pastor “wishes to downgrade these beings, so he refers to them as angels.” The problem is that Goulder’s formulation of the opponents’ Christology relies heavily on the writings of Irenaeus (especially Haer. 1.26.1-2) and Eusebius (especially Hist. eccl. 3.28.6;
Goulder claims that these writers describe a Christology that was prevalent in Ephesus at the time of the Pastorals. However, I will demonstrate from the portions of the primary text where we have good reason to think the opponents are in view that, while they did promulgate deviant doctrine, there is no evidence to suggest they denied the incarnation. While it is possible that Cerinthus’ doctrine circulated in first-century Ephesus, the doctrine is entirely “unexpressed” in 1 and 2 Timothy.

Goulder’s identification and reconstruction have skewed his exegesis of the PD. Sadly, he is but one of many examples of this problem in the study of opponents. It seems to me that there is little gain and much risk involved in the standard move of identification and historical reconstruction; therefore, it is a move I will not make. I will suggest what I consider to be a wiser approach, one that intentionally shies away from the type of identification and historical reconstruction we find in Goulder’s study. By refusing to rely on sources other than the primary text to provide the details of the conflict, I will arrive at a more secure, though perhaps less specific, understanding of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy.

A potential objection to my methodological restraint is that, because I refuse to compare my findings with data derived from external sources, the methodology formulated herein lacks testability. If the author excludes the possibility of external corroboration, how is the reader to determine if the methodology has succeeded or failed? Two points should be noted. First, as I hope to demonstrate throughout this study, in the case of 1 and 2 Timothy, as the state of scholarship now stands, there is no likely external data that can be used to corroborate the data of the primary text. Thus, the forcefulness of this objection is greatly diminished. Second, even without the possibility of external corroboration, the method is measurable, at least to a degree: the methodology will have succeeded if it accounts for the full scope of internal evidence.

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144 “[Irenaeus] says, on the authority of Polycarp, that the apostle John once entered a bath to bathe; but, learning that Cerinthus was within, he sprang from the place and rushed out of the door, for he could not bear to remain under the same roof with him. And he advised those that were with him to do the same, saying, “Let us flee, lest the bath fall; for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within” (Hist. eccl. 3.28.6). Hist. eccl. 4.14.6 locates the aforementioned event in Ephesus.

145 See Sumney, Identifying Paul’s Opponents, 77–86; idem, “Studying Paul’s Opponents,” 50–58, who points out this same problem in Georgi, Schmithals, and especially Martin and Arnold.
3. An Ecclesial Objection: Since the Standard Procedure is Implemented for the Purpose of Procuring Historical Details, the Findings are Largely Irrelevant to the Church

We must come to terms with one final defect: investigations of opponents that follow the standard historical-critical procedure may leave the historian of early Christianity reveling in a treasure trove of data, but they circumvent the needs of the church. How do Christian believers benefit from the (often highly questionable) backdrops the historical-critical procedure produces?

In his most recent treatment of the opponents in Colossians, Clinton Arnold argues that the standard historical-critical study of opponents (what he calls “background studies”) is of some use to the church. In the large majority of the article, Arnold collects data from sources other than the primary text. He then concludes that a figure deeply influenced by what he calls “folk Judaism” stood behind the problem at Colossae. But it is the final three pages of Arnold’s study that are particularly interesting. In this concluding section, Arnold openly acknowledges the limitations of background studies. He writes, “It really does not matter if one sees the problem at Colossae as Gnosticism, Jewish Mysticism, or local shamanistic practices; the theology of the letter will remain the same. In other words, the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ over all of creation remains the same, however the background problem is described. The new identity of believers as co-resurrected with Christ and as members of his kingdom is positively affirmed regardless of how the setting is reconstructed.” But then, in an attempt to salvage his study for the church, Arnold suggests: “If the problematic teaching at Colossae reflects some form of emphasis on the means for obtaining ritual power for handling spiritual attack, this has great implications for Christian discipleship in a variety of cultural contexts.” He concludes his article with six potential applications, one of which is: “For Christians fearful that Christ may not be sufficiently powerful to guard them against demonic assault, you need simply to reflect more deeply about who Jesus is as the creator of heaven and earth and as preeminent over all creation.”

147 Ibid., 9–20.
148 Ibid., 24.
149 Ibid, emphasis added.
150 Ibid., 25, emphasis added.
151 Ibid.
Though I applaud Arnold’s eagerness to make his scholarship serve the interests of the church, it is difficult to see how this implication, or the others he suggests, arise out of his identification and historical reconstruction rather than out of the primary text itself. Would not this be a very straightforward implication of the teaching contained in Colossians (e.g., Col 1:13, 15-20)? It seems that even in Arnold’s study there is much to stimulate the historian, but little to benefit the church.

It is here that I hope to make a further methodological contribution by considering what the new, yet old, practice of theological interpretation of Scripture has to say to the study of Paul’s opponents. Though there exists an array of explanations of theological interpretation of Scripture, there seems to be general agreement that theological interpretation is a perspective or practice of and for the church.\textsuperscript{152} In his recent work, Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation, Joel Green refers to theological interpretation as a form of “interested” exegesis; it is identified by certain sensibilities and aims, and especially by its ecclesial location.\textsuperscript{153}


\textsuperscript{153} Green, Practicing Theological Interpretation, 2.
Daniel Treier writes, “If we had to narrow the essential theme of much literature on theological interpretation of Scripture down to one word, the core concept might seem to be the church. Old and New Testament Studies operate as guilds within the university, and so that is the public arena that defines their ‘best practices’ and ultimate aims. Theological interpretation of Scripture need not refuse such academic practices, but its ultimate aim is to serve the interests of another public, the church.”

Theological interpretation has as its goal the ecclesial and personal formation of God’s people. For theological interpreters, Scripture is the sacred body of texts within which one should expect to hear in a unique way the voice of God for the body of Christ. This voice is not one to be ignored. In his discussion of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s view of Scripture, John Webster claims, “Holy Scripture is the viva vox Dei,” and “this living voice demands an attitude of ready submission and active compliance.” Those who are in Christ Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit perform the script of Scripture.

My engagement with the recent work on theological interpretation of Scripture has led me to the conclusion that any study of Scripture must commence, and continue, with an interest in hearing the voice of God for the church. If we are going to study opponents, then, the study must be characterized by ecclesial concern. In the method formulated below, I have tried to give special consideration to the question: How might we analyze the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy for the maximum benefit of the church? Thus, we might think of this study as an “interested” investigation of opponents.

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154 Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, 201.
155 Green, “Response: Theological Interpretation on Display: Trajectories and Questions,” 255.
159 Some scholars are not at all “interested” in their investigations. A prime example is Lüdemann, *Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity*, 1–14, who speaks against studies that have “an ecclesiastical or clerical orientation” (4). Lüdemann argues,
Though I am perhaps for the first time suggesting this type of study of the opponents reflected in NT letters, an “interested” investigation of adversaries certainly is nothing new. We find this approach in the early heresiologists. Whatever else might be said about Irenaeus’ work, *Adversus haereses*, we must acknowledge the author’s fervor for the church. Provoked by men who “falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation” (1.Pre.1), Irenaeus set out to describe and dismantle distortions of the apostolic gospel. In the preface of his treatise he writes:

Lest, therefore, through my neglect, some should be carried off, even as sheep are by wolves, while they perceive not the true character of those men,—because they outwardly are covered with sheep’s clothing (against whom the Lord has enjoined us to be on guard), and because their language resembles ours, while their sentiments are very different,—I have deemed it my duty… to unfold to thee, my friend, these portentous and profound mysteries… I do this, in order that thou, obtaining an acquaintance with these things, mayest in turn explain them to all those with whom thou art connected, and exhort them to avoid such an abyss of madness and of blasphemy against Christ (1.Pre.2).

My contention is that we need a method for studying the opponents reflected in the various NT letters that is shaped by a similar ecclesial concern.

C. Constructing a New Method: An “Interested” Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy

In this final section of the chapter, I will outline the steps we will take in our “interested” investigation of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy. This method will include some principles from previously constructed historical-critical methods (e.g., Dahl, Tyson, Hickling, Barclay, Sumney), but it will differ from the standard historical-critical procedure, primarily in aim.


The standard procedure is implemented to answer the question, “Who were these opponents?” By first examining the primary text, and then by searching for parallels in the ancient literature, the interpreter aims to identify the opponents—they are “Gnostics,” for example. This identification opens up a stream of supplementary data—the “Gnostic” sources—so the interpreter can, finally, reconstruct with greater detail the historical situation that gave rise to the NT letter. The problems associated with this sort of historical endeavor, some of which I have drawn attention to above, lead me to suggest an interrogative shift: from “Who?” to “What?” and “How?” Rather than asking “Who

“It is often presupposed that theology is a discipline of the church. This widespread view has hindered research more than it has helped it” (5).
were these opponents?” I will focus on the questions “What doctrines and practices set the opponents apart from the faithful Christian community?” and “How does/should the Christian community respond to them?” Answering the question “Who?” necessarily involves the accumulation of other evidence, evidence for contemporary movements which could conceivably be the objects of Paul’s rebuke. But the questions “What?” and “How?” can be answered (even if only partially) by analyzing the primary text alone. There will be no need, then, for an identification/historical reconstruction, and thus, no risk of behind-the-text “discoveries” dominating the exegesis. The “What?” and “How?” questions allow us to remain focused on the primary text for the duration of our investigation.

It should be noted that, though no effort will be made in this project to identify the opponents (i.e., to locate them on the first-century socio-religious map), it will be necessary for me to interact with some of the existing hypotheses. Since other interpreters of 1 and 2 Timothy have treated the polemical portions of the letters as the object of historical inquiry, such interaction is unavoidable. Questions of “Gnostic” and other ideological influences on specific terms and themes will be discussed under the relevant exegetical sections in chapters two to five. Additionally, in chapter six, I will provide an overall assessment of a number of current theories/identifications. Perhaps I can make a small contribution in this area by shortening the docket of theories for those scholars who are not yet willing to make the interrogative shift I propose.

Asking the questions “What?” and “How?” also allows us to study the opponents in a way that should be of great benefit to the church. Since I have suggested that any study of Scripture must commence, and continue, with an interest in hearing the voice of God for the church, we need to consider how the portions of 1 and 2 Timothy that deal with the opponents might provide direction for the body of Christ. How do these sections of Scripture provide the script for the church’s performance? Before we can answer this question, we must first begin to think of the adversaries reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy not

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*160* For a similar approach, see Lorin L. Cranford, “Encountering Heresy: Insight from the Pastoral Epistles,” *SwJT* 22 (1980): 23–40, who discusses possible identifications of the opponents, while freely admitting, “Of greater importance is the assessment of their teachings and practices as reflected in the Pastoral Letters” (27).

*161* By “primary text” I mean 1 and 2 Timothy within their canonical context. Conclusions about the opponents will come from 1 and 2 Timothy alone, but I will make use of the full Pauline corpus, as well as other portions of Scripture, in attempting to understand the text of 1 and 2 Timothy (see the discussion of authorship above). In short, I will allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.
as some ancient group to be studied by the historian of early Christianity, but as opponents of the one church. In biblical language, the Spirit comes upon believers to unite them to Christ in his death and resurrection, simultaneously uniting them to his body, the one church. This means that, as Billings, Green, and other proponents of theological interpretation have argued, when believers today read Scripture, we are not reading “other people’s mail.”\textsuperscript{162} The writings of Scripture are not just addressed to ancient Israel or to the early church or to Timothy; through Scripture, the Spirit addresses all of God’s people. As Jenson argues:

A key assumption of historical-critical exegesis, as mostly practiced, cannot be right. We were all taught—and, I fear, I myself have taught—that before we “apply” a passage to ourselves, we first have to grasp it insofar as it is not about ourselves. We first have to understand a proposition of Paul’s or a story about Samson in its community, specified precisely as not our community. The first part of that last sentence is true; the second is false. For the community from which Scripture comes is not in fact “not our community”; the church to which Paul belonged is the very same, diachronically continuous church to which we belong.\textsuperscript{163}

Accordingly, when we read 1 and 2 Timothy, we are not reading about other people’s opponents. Boundaries erected for the Christian community in 1 and 2 Timothy are boundaries erected for the one church. Moreover, the response of the believers in Ephesus to those who stood on the other side of the boundaries should guide believers today in our interactions with outsiders. The Spirit clearly says that the drama in which all of God’s people are participants will be one with antagonists (1 Tim 4:1).\textsuperscript{164} In his discussion of 1 Tim 4:1-5, Calvin rightly claims: “Paul is warning not only the church at Ephesus through Timothy, but all churches everywhere against false teachers, who, by introducing false worship and ensnaring consciences with new laws, adulterate God’s true worship and corrupt the pure doctrine of the faith. This is the real purpose of this passage which we must specially keep in mind.”\textsuperscript{165} In each act of the drama, there will be distortions of the gospel, manifestations of the opponents reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy. It is in the interest of the church, then, that I come to 1 and 2 Timothy with the questions “What doctrines and practices set the opponents apart from the faithful Christian

\textsuperscript{162} Billings, The Word of God for the People of God, 61; Green, Practicing Theological Interpretation, 15–24.
\textsuperscript{163} Jenson, “Scripture’s Authority in the Church,” 31, emphasis original.
\textsuperscript{164} See the discussion of this verse in the following chapter.
\textsuperscript{165} Calvin, Comm. 1 Tim 4:1. Twomey, The Pastoral Epistles Through the Centuries, 12, notes that both Luther and Calvin consistently collapse the boundaries between their reforming moments and the Pastor’s conflicts.
community?” and “How does/should the Christian community respond to them?” By asking the “What?” question, I aim to clarify the one church’s confession, as well as what her confession requires her to denounce. By asking the “How?” question, I aim to clarify the one church’s mission, especially as it relates to those who are not just indifferent, but belligerent toward the apostolic gospel.

2. Outlining the Steps of Our Investigation

With the aforementioned questions in mind, our “interested” investigation of the opponents reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy will progress through three stages. First, I will exegete all discourse units containing what I will call explicit language. Second, I will analyze the discourse units containing implicit language. Third, I will bring together all the data unearthed in the primary text and offer some overall conclusions about the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy.

I will begin by selecting and studying the discourse units containing explicit language. In these units of 1 and 2 Timothy, we have clear and certain reference to the opponents and/or the doctrines/practices they promulgate. Explicit language is found, for example, in 1 Tim 1:3: “As I urged you while I was going to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus, in order that you might command certain ones not to teach deviant doctrine.” Here, Paul is very clear: there are opponents (τίς), these opponents are promulgating deviant doctrine (ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω), and Timothy’s task is one of correction (παραγγέλω). Though some scholars prefer to pluck out the individual verses where they think the opponents are most clearly in view, I will analyze entire discourse units containing oppositional language. While the opponents may not be equally in view in every verse of the unit, the only way to interpret correctly the references to the opponents is to look at these references in context. This is a chief principle of exegesis, and it must not be violated simply because we suppose the opponents are more in focus in 1 Tim 1:3-4 than in 1 Tim 1:5, for example. Explicit units provide the clearest and most certain evidence, so our study will begin with these pericopae.

The second step of the investigation is the selection and analysis of the implicit discourse units. These units will contain expressions that call the opponents to mind without mentioning them directly. While scholars have suggested a number of clues that might help the interpreter identify allusions to the opponents (e.g., emphasis, elaboration, 166 Contra Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 256–258.

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166 Contra Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 256–258.
expressed dissatisfaction, unfamiliar language), the most important clue, and the one we will rely upon in this study, is repetition. When significant words, phrases, or themes found in the explicit units occur elsewhere in the letter, it is highly probable that the opponents are once again in view.\footnote{167 A similar approach is taken by Martin, \textit{By Philosophy and Empty Deceit}, 21; Christian Stettler, “The Opponents at Colossae,” in \textit{Paul and His Opponents}, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 172. Outside the arena of Pauline studies, see Streett, \textit{They Went Out from Us}, 112–131, who argues strongly for the primacy of explicit passages.} Admittedly, there is a certain amount of subjectivity involved in determining which words or themes are significant. As a general rule, I will look for concepts that seem to be more developed in the discourse, rather than terms that are simply mentioned in passing. The law, for example, surfaces in the first explicit unit of 1 Timothy (1:3-7) and then resurfaces with elaboration in 1 Tim 1:8-11; thus, I identify 1 Tim 1:8-11 as an implicit unit. On the other hand, though some scholars suggest that the qualifications for elders (1 Tim 3:1-7) deliberately counter the disputatious nature of the opponents,\footnote{168 See, for example, Van Neste, \textit{Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles}, 107–108.} which is clear in the explicit units (e.g., 1 Tim 6:2b-5), the peaceable posture of elders is mentioned without development; therefore, I do not identify 1 Tim 3:1-7 as an implicit unit. The principle of repetition, along with Barclay’s principle of range, will serve as the primary controls on mirror-reading. I will engage in mirror-reading only in those pericopae where it is highly probable that the opponents are on Paul’s radar, and even in these pericopae I will try to stay alert to the fact that Paul’s utterances are open to a range of mirror-images.

In this study, I will \textit{not} utilize neutral units. I refer here to units containing general Christian instruction that cannot be connected to the explicit units via the principle of repetition. Such instruction could be issued in a specifically hostile setting or in a relatively peaceful setting; therefore, this teaching may or may not have anything at all to do with the opponents. Since it is right to presume that the content of the letters would have been at least partially determined by the turmoil in the community (contra Hickling), the opponents may be behind certain themes that surface outside the explicit and implicit units. However, outside these units we can speak only of possible reference to the opponents. Therefore, I will limit my investigation to the explicit units (certain reference) and the implicit units (highly probable reference).

The climax of our study will be an overall account of the theological-ethical collision in Ephesus. After analyzing the pertinent sections of the primary text, I will be
ready to, first, provide a **disciplined description** of the opponents. Giving special attention to the question “What doctrines and practices set the opponents apart from the faithful Christian community?” I will offer a composite sketch of the adversaries that relies only on the evidence unearthed in the explicit and implicit discourse units. I will try to avoid ambiguous designations, attempting instead to offer a precise explanation of the theological and ethical points on which Paul and the opponents collide. Next, I will attend to the question, “How does/should the Christian community respond to the opponents?” Bringing together all the data from the explicit and implicit units, I will provide a detailed account of the way the community was to handle the hostility in Ephesus. As a follow-up to this overall account of the theological-ethical collision in Ephesus, I will consider the implications for the Christian community today.

**Conclusion**

In the first main section of this chapter, I have articulated my general approach to 1 and 2 Timothy. I have suggested that we are dealing with two types of letter, an epistolary version of the *Mandata Principis* (1 Timothy) and a personal paraenetic letter nonpareil (2 Timothy). I have further suggested that both 1 and 2 Timothy were dispatched to Ephesus, and that both letters address a crisis in the Christian community, a crisis that was caused by a certain group of opponents. I have argued that the letters do provide specific information about these opponents.

In the second main section of the chapter, I have argued for a new way of analyzing opponents. I have gathered helpful *principles* from some previously constructed methods for identifying opponents (Dahl, Tyson, Hickling, Barclay, and Sumney), while at the same time critiquing the standard historical-critical *procedure* for the study of opponents. The standard procedure, I have said, yields ambiguous designations and historical reconstructions that often control the exegesis of the primary text. The greatest problem, however, is that the standard procedure is implemented with historical, rather than with ecclesial, concern.

Due to the problems associated with the historical-critical procedure, I have proposed an alternative approach, which I have referred to as an “interested” investigation of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy. An “interested” investigation is one that: 1) commences, and continues, with ecclesial concern, seeking to study opponents for the maximum benefit of the church, and 2) remains tethered to the primary text (explicit and implicit discourse units). I have argued that by ridding ourselves of the question “Who were these opponents?” we remove the need for a venture beyond the primary text. I have
suggested that we ask instead “What doctrines and practices set these opponents apart from the faithful Christian community?” and “How does/should the Christian community respond to them?” These questions, I have argued, will allow us to produce a report on the opponents that will be in the interest of the church. The “What?” question will clarify the one church’s confession, as well as what her confession requires her to denounce. The “How?” question will clarify the one church’s mission, especially as it relates to those who are not just indifferent, but belligerent toward the apostolic gospel. In sum, the method I have proposed should allow us to arrive at more secure (though perhaps less specific) conclusions that will be more beneficial to the church.
Exegetical Analysis of Explicit Units in 1 Timothy

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, in this “interested” investigation of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy, I will remain tethered to the primary text. The investigation will focus on discourse units containing explicit language, where we have certain reference to the opponents, and units containing implicit language, where we have highly probable reference to the opponents. We begin with the explicit units in 1 Timothy. Explicit language is found in five units of 1 Timothy: 1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-5; 6:2b-5, 20-21a.\(^1\) The opponents are more clearly in view in certain parts of these pericopae, but since one of the features of our method is the utmost regard for context, discourse units will remain intact.

I. Promulgation of Deviant Doctrine in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3-7)

The first letter to Timothy opens, not with the customary expression of thanks or praise to God, but with a reminder of certain teachers who are endangering the Christian community in Ephesus.\(^2\) From v. 3b forward, every verb of the unit refers to the opponents, with the single exception of ἐστὶν in v. 5.\(^3\) After the introduction of the false teachers in v. 3, Paul goes on to mention, albeit in somewhat mysterious terms, the content and results of the false teaching that Timothy must bring to a halt.

A. Paul Reaffirms His Orders to Timothy: Remain in Ephesus and Restrain Those Who Oppose the Apostolic Gospel (vv. 3-4)

1. Timothy Must Command the Opponents Not to Teach Deviant Doctrine (v. 3)

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\(^1\) Here I differ only slightly from Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 256–268, who also identifies these five discourse units, though he attempts to isolate certain verses within each unit (1:3-4, 6-7, 19b-20; 4:1-3; 6:3-5, 20-21). I am also close to Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus From Paul to Ignatius, 209, who states that the author writes of the opponents in 1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-7; 6:3-10, 20-21. Young, The Theology of the Pastoral Letters, 5-6, finds the opponents in 1:1-7, 19-20; 4:1-7; 6:3ff.

\(^2\) Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 37.

\(^3\) Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 20.
Paul opens the letter body by reminding Timothy of his responsibilities in Ephesus, and the opponents are first on the agenda.⁴ The syntax of v. 3 is ambiguous; the sentence begins with a καθώς clause that has no apodosis. Towner is probably right when he asserts: “[Paul] either simply assumed that Timothy knew what was to follow, or became so caught up in what he was saying that he forgot to pull the syntactical trigger and complete the thought.”⁵ Digressions like this are fairly common, both in the undisputed and in the disputed Pauline writings (e.g., Rom 5:12-18; Gal 2:4-6; Eph 3:2-13). The present participle, πορευόµενος, in the phrase πορευόµενος εἰς Μακεδονίαν, modifies the aorist verb, παρεκάλεσά. First Timothy 1:3a may be translated, “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus.” If 1 Timothy is authentic, the first part of v. 3 leaves a bit of historical uncertainty. When did Paul issue the original order to Timothy to stay on at Ephesus? Additionally, was Paul present in Ephesus with Timothy when this original order was given? Any attempt to work out the specifics of the original assignment must remain provisional, and, since the aforementioned questions have no direct bearing on the interpretation of this pericope, we will not allow such inquiries to distract us here.⁶ What the text claims is that at the time of the writing of 1 Timothy Paul was still engaged in his apostolic ministry, part of which was continuing to guide the churches and delegates under his care. He had somehow previously placed Timothy in Ephesus with specific orders to stay put. Now, Paul recapitulates those orders: Timothy is to remain in Ephesus because there is still important work to be done.

The reason Timothy is to stay put in Ephesus emerges in the purpose clause (ἵνα) of v. 3b. His chief task is to confront the opponents.⁷ At this point, no names are given;

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⁴ Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 38, points out that the opening most closely resembles Galatians, which opens with a statement of astonishment over how the Galatians have turned to a “different gospel.”

⁵ Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 106. See also the helpful discussion of different ways of dealing with the syntax in Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 362–363.

⁶ Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 15, bluntly state that every unprejudiced reader will think Paul was in Ephesus. For a critique of this view and an extended discussion of the evidence suggesting Paul was not with Timothy in Ephesus at the time this original order was given, see Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 16-18. For what is in my view a persuasive case against those who claim the language of “leaving behind” co-workers, as opposed to “sending” them, reflects a post-apostolic situation, see Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 364. He rightly concludes: “The language used here certainly does not require the later setting” (emphasis added).

⁷ Stepp, Leadership Succession in the World of the Pauline Circle, 183–207, argues that the unifying theme of the PD is Paul’s absence, and how Paul through succession addresses the problems caused by this absence. Stepp suggests that the
the opponents are only referred to as “certain ones” (τις). The undisputed Paul frequently uses the indefinite pronoun to refer to troublemakers (e.g., 1 Cor 15:12; 2 Cor 10:12; Gal 1:7; 2:12; Phil 1:15), and this is the author’s favorite way of speaking of the deviant ones in 1 Timothy (1:3, 6, 19; 4:1; 5:15; 6:10, 21). We should not expect that Paul knew the name of every adversary in Ephesus, so the plural indefinite pronoun is a perfectly natural way of referring to the false teachers, many of whom Paul probably did not know personally. But there very well may be a pejorative sense to the expression; Paul wants to make clear the fact that “they” are not with “us.”

Timothy is told to “command” or to “give orders to” (παραγγέλλω) these opponents. The verb παραγγέλλω appears some thirty times in the NT, and it always carries connotations of power: the command comes by virtue of authority. Apostolic authority undergirds the commands issued in the Pauline epistles (undisputed: 1 Cor 7:10; 11:17; 1 Thess 4:11; disputed: 2 Thess 3:4, 6, 10, 12; 1 Tim 1:3; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13, 17). Particularly helpful is 2 Thess 3:4-12, where the verb occurs four times.

And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command (παραγγέλλομεν). May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. Now we command (Παραγγέλλομεν) you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command (παραγγέλλομεν): If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some

succession found here in 1 Tim 1:3 (and throughout 1 Timothy) is a succession of task; Paul passes on to Timothy the particular task of correcting the false teachers in Ephesus. He writes: “As Paul’s true successor, Timothy acts in the way that Paul would have acted, with Paul’s authority, to complete the task… This succession ensures continued institutional vitality: Paul made Timothy his successor so as to keep the gospel pure and effective” (187).

8 With Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 365. Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 38, says the effect of the indefinite pronoun is “to portray the troublemakers as shadowy figures with an indistinct past and to obscure their actual numbers and influence.” Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 117–118, points out that the indefinite pronoun allows any in the community who tend toward the opponents’ position to correct their views without losing face.

9 See TLNT, s.v. “παραγγέλλω.”
among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command (παραγγέλλωμεν) and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

Here, Paul commands the hardworking believers and the idle believers at Thessalonica, and these commands are issued in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 6, 12). All who profess Christ come under his lordship and are therefore expected to act in accordance with apostolic commands. For this reason, Paul may state in v. 4 that he is convinced (πείθω) the Thessalonian believers are currently striving to obey his commands, and that they will continue on this same path in the future (ποιεῖτε καὶ ποιήσετε).

In light of its use elsewhere in the Pauline writings, it seems best to conclude that Paul’s use of παραγγέλλω here in 1 Tim 1:3 indicates that the opponents were previously perceived as being in good standing within the Pauline community in Ephesus, and are therefore still expected to submit to apostolic authority. If these “certain ones” had not at least appeared to be part of the church, then what authority would Paul or Timothy have had over them? They would not have been “under community jurisdiction.”¹⁰ Fee, however, probably goes too far here. He writes, “There is no hint in either letter to Timothy that the certain men who were teaching false doctrines were outsiders, as was the case in Galatia (Gal 2:4) and Corinth (e.g., 2 Cor 11:4, 12-15). Moreover, Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders, as recorded in Acts 20:17-35, clearly predicts that the ‘savage wolves’ who ‘will not spare the flock’ will be some men ‘from your own number’ (vv. 29-30)… The church has been greatly endangered by some elders (probably), who think of themselves as teachers of the law…”¹¹ The problem is that this claim finds very little verification in 1 and 2 Timothy, as I hope to demonstrate throughout this work. While we have reasons to think that Paul’s prophecy, recorded by

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¹⁰ Similarly, Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 25; Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 38; Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 179; Theodore of Mopsuestia, Comm. 1 Tim 1:3-4: “For it is clear that [Paul] makes his statement, so that you may give orders to certain people, about his own people and not about strangers. For it was not Timothy’s job to give notice to outsiders” (emphasis original). This seems to be consistent with Paul’s words in 1 Cor 5:9-13. When he calls the Christian community to hold a particular sexually rebellious man accountable, Paul makes clear the fact that this man is to be disciplined precisely because he is within the community.

¹¹ Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 39-40. For similar claims about errant elders, see Pietersen, Polemic of the Pastorals, 139; Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 207, 265.
Luke in Acts 20:17-35, at some point became a reality in Ephesus,\textsuperscript{12} there does not appear to be sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that the prophecy was fulfilled at the time of the writing of 1 and 2 Timothy.

What sets these “certain ones” apart as adversaries is their teaching. Timothy is to remain in Ephesus so that he might command these adversaries “not to teach deviant doctrine” (μὴ ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν). The verb ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω, presumably coined here and found subsequently only in Christian literature, literally means “to teach other things.”\textsuperscript{13} The term is uncommon, occurring only twice in the NT (1 Tim 1:3; 6:3). However, the term is consistent with the undisputed Paul’s accusations of opponents, especially his claim in 2 Cor 11:4 and Gal 1:6 that opponents preach a “different gospel” (ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον).\textsuperscript{14} The translation offered here, “to teach deviant doctrine,” has been chosen because of what is implied by the first part of the compound. “Other” (ἑτερος) indicates that two items are in view. ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω, then, presupposes the existence of a stable, recognized body of content that constituted authentic Christian doctrine.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, the opponents’ teaching is best classified as “deviant”; it has departed from the standard. It becomes evident in vv. 10-11\textsuperscript{16} that the presupposed standard is the apostolic gospel. Hence, Fee’s conclusion here is perceptive: the “other things” the opponents teach are “not innocent trivialities; they are clear perversions of the pure gospel.”\textsuperscript{17}

Korinna Zamfir has recently suggested: “It is inappropriate to make dogmatic statements about the truth-element of the competing positions. Certainly, the author may regard an alternative position as wrong and qualify it as heterodox. But commentators should not uncritically identify with the judgment made by the author and consequently interpret the restrictions he imposes as a necessary step to counter an intrinsically wrong

\textsuperscript{12} See the discussion in Trebilco, \textit{The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius}, 189–195. Trebilco concludes, “Given that Luke presents the early church as generally united, and that this is the only occasion in Acts when he mentions false teachers, he must have included the note because false teachers were actually a problem after Paul’s time… We can suggest then that events turned out along the lines of [Acts 20:29-30] and that there was trouble in the Ephesian church from both insiders and outsiders after Paul’s time and prior to Luke writing Acts” (193-194).

\textsuperscript{13} BDAG, s.v. “ἐτεροδιδασκαλέω.”

\textsuperscript{14} This is also pointed out by Johnson, \textit{The First and Second Letters to Timothy}, 162; Mounce, \textit{Pastoral Epistles}, 19.

\textsuperscript{15} Smith, \textit{Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,”} 75.

\textsuperscript{16} See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:8-11 in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{17} Fee, \textit{1 and 2 Timothy, Titus}, 40.
doctrine that endangers the community.”  

She adds: “It is impossible to formulate objective conclusions on the truth or falsity of [the opponents’] views and to say with any degree of certainty that the opponents were indeed teaching heresy.”

Zamfir suggests that the opponents cannot be labeled heretics partly because we possess no primary sources that reveal their complete doctrinal system. While Zamfir is correct in her claim that we have only partial knowledge of what the opponents taught, she is mistaken in her claim that we have insufficient data to conclude that the opponents are heterodox. It is clear in this opening pericope, as well as in the other explicit units of 1 Timothy, that in Paul’s view the opponents do not teach the apostolic gospel (discussed further below).

2. Timothy Must Command the Opponents Not to Dwell on Fables and Fanciful Ancestries (v. 4)

The particle μηδὲ coordinates the following action (προσέχειν, v. 4) with the preceding action (ἐτεροδιδασκαλεῖν, v. 3). Not only are they teaching deviant doctrine, these opponents are “preoccupied with stories and endless accounts of ancestry” (προσέχειν μύθοις καὶ γενεαλογίαις ἀπεράντοις). The verb προσέχω (“to pay attention to”) is used four other times in the PD: twice of those dominated by demonic or deviant teaching (1 Tim 4:1; Titus 1:14), once of those devoted to the reading of Scripture (1 Tim 4:13), and once of deacons who are not to be dependent on wine (1 Tim 3:8). In the PD, the verb always carries connotations of strong influence or control. In v. 4, then, it appears that the opponents are more than vaguely interested in what Paul classifies as stories and accounts of ancestries; they are completely immersed in them. But from the modern interpreter’s perspective, the waters in which the opponents are drowning are indeed murky; the phrase “stories and accounts of ancestry” is cryptic. The Greek is easy enough to translate, but pinpointing the precise referent is quite difficult. Scholars divide, and we might say the same of the theories regarding this enigmatic phrase as Paul said of the genealogies in his day—they are “endless.”

18 Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 170.
19 Ibid., 171.
20 Andrew Y. Lau, Manifest in Flesh: The Epiphany Christology of the Pastoral Epistles, WUNT 2.86 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 21, rightly says the author “gives the overall impression that the apostolic gospel is undermined and the orthodox faith is now seriously threatened by the false teachers.”
21 See, for example, F.H. Colson, “Myths and Genealogies: A Note on the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” JTS 19 (1918): 265–271, who connects myths and genealogies to an intellectualism or a conceited pseudo-Hellenic Judaism; Ford, “A Note on Proto-Montanism in the Pastoral Epistles,” 341, who connects them to the
What we can know is that by using the term μῦθος Paul intends to erect an even clearer boundary between these opponents and the faithful believers in Ephesus. The word appears in five places in the NT (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:14; 2 Pet 1:16). Second Timothy 4:4 is most telling, for here myths (τοὺς μύθους) are in contrast to truth (τῆς ἀληθείας). In fact, it is a turning away from, or a rejecting of (ἀποστρέφω) the truth, that leads one into the territory of myths. Stating that the opponents are immersed in myths is thus akin to saying that they dabble in falsehood.22 Spicq suggests that “myths” here are dreamed-up tales, pernicious precisely because they are opposed to the λόγος of the true faith.23 The exact referent may not be within our reach, but we may say that by using μῦθος Paul further evaluates the opponents’ teaching and their thinking as deviant and therefore as dangerous.

γενεαλογία, too, is obscure. The word occurs only twice in the NT, both times in the PD (1 Tim 1:4; Titus 3:9). It has a long history of use, and occurs often in the contemporary and later literature (e.g., Philo, Moses 2.47; Josephus, Ant. 11.71; Plutarch, Num. 18.4; Irenaeus, Haer. 1.Pre.1; Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 1.7). It is clear that the noun refers to a lineage or family tree, and the verbal form refers to the tracing of a pedigree. But whose ancestry is in view here in v. 4 and what purpose the lineage played in the thinking of the opponents is unclear. Irenaeus applied this verse to the “Gnostics,” and several commentators still want to find some connection to “Gnostic” systems of aeons standing in genealogical relationship with one another.24 But Arnold, in his study of Cataphrygian heresy of the second century; Goulder, “The Pastor’s Wolves,” 247-248, who connects them to a gnostic movement which emerged from within Judaism; Martin, Pauli Testamentum, 202-230, who concludes the opponents were priests who claimed authority in the communities to which the Pastorals were directed, and attempted to substantiate their claim by advancing their genealogical credentials.


23 TLNT, s.v. “μῦθος.” Luther says: “[Paul] firmly calls them myths, because everyone who departs from the doctrine once delivered does not teach the Lord’s Word but myths which are his own dreams and mere poison” (LW 28:221).

24 See, for example, Lightfoot, Biblical Essays, 414; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge, 14; Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 17. These want to find some type of early Judaizing Gnosis. Jens Herzer, “Juden-Christen-Gnostiker: Zur Gegnerproblematik Der Pastoralbriefe,” 157–167, claims that, while Titus deals with Jews from outside the church and 2 Timothy addresses Christian opponents, 1 Timothy addresses “Gnostics” who have left the church. Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Female Body as Social Space in 1 Timothy,” NTS 57 (2011): 171, suggests the polemic of
Ephesians, provides interpreters with an important reminder: “There is no extant evidence of Gnosis as having existed in Asia Minor in the first century… This evidence does not necessarily imply that the beginnings of Gnosis did not yet exist, but it should caution us against assuming that it did exist and then interpreting [the primary text] in light of the second- and third-century systems.”

The adjective ἀπέραντος, found only here in the NT, could be taken literally to mean “endless” or “infinite.” This is the way the term is used in the LXX (3 Macc 2:9; Job 36:26). However, “fruitless” or “pointless” seems to be the more intelligible meaning in this context (for what is an “infinite” genealogy?). Paul adds the qualifier to make the point that the opponents have opted for a means with no good end.

The indefinite relative pronoun ἄντινες refers back to the “myths and endless genealogies” and categorizes them by the result they produce (“of a kind which”). The opponents’ fables and fanciful ancestries “promote useless speculation” (ἐζητήσεις παρέξουσιν). In contrast to the speculation of the opponents (μᾶλλον ἡ), the result that is to be desired is a focus on “the redemptive arrangement of God that is by faith” (οἰκονομία θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει). The noun οἰκονομία has as its first meaning “household

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1 Timothy is against “both gnostics and Marcion.” For a recent critique of the “Gnostic” theory, see Zamfir, *Men and Women in the Household of God*, 172-176. Some other interpreters have claimed that the false teachers might have been tampering with the lineage of Jesus. See, for example, Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 245–248. But there is no evidence in the letter that leads us to this conclusion.


26 TLNT, s.v. “ἀπέραντος.”

27 Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 111.

28 In place of the NT hapax, ἐζητήσεις, a number of witnesses, primarily Western (D F G and a number of minuscules), read the much more familiar ζητήσεις (which Paul uses in 1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9). But the reading ζητήσεις is supported by a variety of witnesses, including the Alexandrian type (א A), and it is much more likely that a scribe would have reduced the compound to a simpler and more common form. With Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 571.

29 The Western οἰκοδομή (D*) should be rejected; οἰκονομία has strong support (א A) and is difficult in this context, which probably led to scribal emendation. See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 571. For similar translations of the phrase μᾶλλον ἡ οἰκονομία θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει, see Luke Timothy Johnson, “Oikonomia Theou: The Theological Voice of 1 Timothy From the Perspective of Pauline Authorship,” *HBT* 21 (1999): 96: “rather than God’s way of ordering reality as it is
management.” The term can be used literally to refer to an estate manager (Luke 16:2-4), or it can be applied in a figurative sense to the office of an apostle. However, the term has as a second meaning “arrangement” or “dispensation,” and can specifically refer to God’s unique plan of salvation (i.e., the arrangements for the redemption of humans). The noun occurs a total of nine times in the NT; six of these occurrences are in the Pauline writings (undisputed: 1 Cor 9:17; disputed: Eph 1:10; 3:2, 9; Col 1:25; 1 Tim 1:4). The undisputed Paul applies the idea of household management to his apostolic office—he has been “entrusted with a stewardship” (ἐκκομίστας, 1 Cor 9:17). At times, the disputed Paul uses ἐκκομίστας to reference the arrangement by which God brings redemption through Christ (Eph 1:10; 3:9), and it appears that this is the way the term is used here in 1 Tim 1:4.

When understood in this sense, ἐκκομίστας provides a perfectly logical counterpart to ἐκζήτησις, with which it is contrasted. Paul intends to communicate that God has a soteriological plan, and this divine arrangement is apprehended by faith in Christ (ἐν πίστει). The emphatic point, then, is that the revelation of God’s redemptive arrangement is the antithesis of the speculation associated with the opponents’ myths and genealogies. In essence, ἐκζήτησις and ἐκκομίστας function in v. 4 in the same way that ἐπεροδιδασκάλω and the presupposed accepted doctrine function in v. 3; both pairs highlight the primary reason the opponents are dangerous—they have turned away from the truth of the gospel and are attempting to rearrange God’s redemptive plan. As Theodore of Mopsuestia apprehended by faith”; Donelson, Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles, 120: “rather than God’s plan of salvation.”

BDAG, s.v. “ἐκκομίστας.”

Contra Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 65; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 367. Moreover, seeing ἐκκομίστας here in v. 4 as a reference to God’s soteriological plan does not necessarily mean that Paul uses the term in a way that is inconsistent with the household language found elsewhere in the PD. The household image has many facets: the church is the house of God (1 Tim 3:15), elders are to understand their task in terms of stewardship within God’s house (1 Tim 3:4-5; Titus 1:7), and God is the one who orders all things, which above all includes his plan for saving his house, the church. On this point, see Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 39; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 164; and especially Young, The Theology of the Pastoral Letters, 54-55: “God’s ‘economy’ or plan of salvation is paramount for these epistles, and the ordering of God’s household is clearly part of the outworking of that plan” (55).

says, the opponents’ myths and genealogies prevent one from “knowing about the divine dispensation by which God saw fit to work out our salvation through Christ.”

While vv. 3-4 have been the springboard for much wild theorizing, it is prudent to curb our creativity and conclude with Fee: “What [the views of the opponents] were precisely is not available to us… It must finally be admitted that we simply do not know, because Paul does not give us enough clues.” A number of Paul’s phrases in these opening verses are frustratingly vague, but we may say, based on the immediate context (discussed below) and irrespective of the precise referents of μύθος and γενεαλογία, that the opponents were using the Scriptures in an inappropriate way. They were probably engaging in some sort of speculative exegesis of the OT, and their reading of the OT promoted an alternative version of the gospel; thus, Paul condemns the opponents’ instruction, referring to it as erroneous teaching that must be suppressed.

B. Paul Differentiates Timothy’s Commission from the Opponents’ Ambition (vv. 5-7)

1. The Goal of Timothy’s Commission is Visible Expression of the Apostolic Gospel (v. 5)

The δέ of v. 5 introduces a contrast; where the myths and genealogies of the opponents have no good end (ἀπέραντος, v. 4), Timothy’s command (παραγγελία) has a good and very specific end—love (ἀγάπη). I suggest, “But the end product of your commission is love,” as a loose yet decisive translation of the first part of v. 5. The context indicates that παραγγελία should be understood as the general charge given to Timothy (1:3, 18). Johnson is right to assert that the term serves as ministerial shorthand: it signifies “Timothy’s entire commission.” Timothy is to minister with an ἀγάπη goal in mind. The term ἀγάπη, as it is used here, is probably ethical shorthand: it

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persuasively that the author carefully develops and extends his conception of God’s redemptive arrangement in order to provide the alternative for the false teaching.

33 Theodore of Mopsuestia, Comm. 1 Tim 1:3-4.

34 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 41–42, emphasis added.

35 With Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 24–28. The interweaving of biblical incidents and legendary expansions, with a particular focus on genealogies, is fairly common in the OT Pseudepigrapha. See, for example, Jubilees and Pseudo-Philo. A similar sort of imaginative retelling of parts of the OT may be what Paul has in mind here in 1 Tim 1:4.

36 For other suggestions, see Norbert Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, RNT (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1963), 103; Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 18; Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 66; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge, 16.

37 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 164.
indicates the entire outward life that is the result of genuine faith. Just as the command to love sums up the law (Matt 22:34-40; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14), so sacrificial love may serve as a synopsis of Christian existence (e.g., Gal 5:6). In the PD, ἀγάπη is usually found together with πίστις (1:5, 14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Titus 2:2). The one side of the coin, πίστις, refers to the posture of belief in Christ (the invisible), and the other side, ἀγάπη, refers to faith’s outworking in the Christian life (the visible). This visible expression of the apostolic gospel is the τέλος of Timothy’s commission.

The connection between the apostolic gospel and ἀγάπη is made even clearer in v. 5b. With the preposition ἐκ (“from,” expressing the source), Paul indicates that ἀγάπη flows out of the person whose inward faculties have been rendered capable of pleasing God. First, he states, love will flow from the one whose heart has been cleansed or purified (καθαρᾶς καρδίας). Heart (καρδία) is a metonymy of subject; the container (heart)
is put for that which is contained (reflection, affection, and decision). The expression “pure heart” derives from the LXX (e.g., καρδίαν καθαρὰν κτίσον ἐν ἔμοι, ὁ θεός, Ps 50:12). καθαρός carries with it the OT concept of ceremonial cleansing in preparation for God’s service. Here in 1 Tim 1:5, the thought is of the divine act of cleansing that takes place in the person who has come to faith by the apostolic gospel (see also 2 Tim 2:22: τῶν ἐπικαλομένων τῶν κύριον ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδιάς). Such a person has been readied for God’s service, and rendered capable of displaying sacrificial love.

Second, according to Paul, love will flow from the one who possesses a “good conscience” (συνείδησις ἀγαθῆς). In general, the term συνείδησις refers to the inward faculty of distinguishing right from wrong. Outside the PD, Paul’s tendency is to employ the term neutrally and independently (e.g., Rom 2:15; 1 Cor 10:25; 2 Cor 1:12). Of the term’s six occurrences in the PD, four are in reference to the believer (1 Tim 1:5, 19; 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3) and two are in reference to the opponents (1 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:15). Each time the word occurs it is qualified in an appropriate way; it is said that the faithful believer has a “good” (ἀγαθὸς) or a “clean” (καθαρὸς) conscience, and the opponent is viewed as having a “cauterized” (καυστηριάζω) or a “defiled” (μιαίνω) conscience.

Compared with the independent use of “conscience” elsewhere in the Pauline writings, the qualified use in the PD reveals a theological development.

41 Throughout the undisputed Pauline writings, the apostle views the heart as the center of spiritual life (Rom 1:21, 24; 5:5; 6:17; 10:6; 1 Cor 2:9; 4:5; Gal 4:6).
42 That the heart is in need of cleansing is affirmed in the NT as well (e.g., μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, Matt 5:8).
43 BDAG, s.v. “καθαρός.”
44 This is consistent with Eph 5:26 and Titus 2:14; in both texts Christ is the one who cleanses (καθαρίζω).
45 Parallel passages are numerous, but two examples should suffice. In Titus 2:14, the cleansing work of Christ readies a person for service to Christ (καθαρίσῃ ἑαυτῷ λαὸν περιούσιον, ἥσιλμαν καλῶν ἑργῶν). In Rom 5:5, Paul states that a person is rendered capable of producing ἀγάπη because God has poured ἀγάπη into the heart through the Holy Spirit (ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἀγίου τοῦ δωδέκατος ἡμῶν).
46 BDAG, s.v. “συνείδησις.” For discussion of “conscience,” see TLNT, s.v. “συνείδησις”; Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 18-20; Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 154-158; and especially Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 217-227, who concludes that “there is no great difference between the accepted letters of Paul and the PE as regards the place of moral norms in relation to conscience and as regards the idea of conscience as expressing a continuing state of approval or lack of disapproval of one’s actions” (224). Compare Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 68-70.
This development perhaps results from the situation in which those perceived as insiders have rejected the gospel and embraced erroneous doctrines and practices. It is also possible that the development is the outcome of Paul’s further reflection on the transformation of the human being through the gospel message and Spirit-indwelling. But the fact that “conscience” occurs in three explicit passages in 1 Timothy (1 Tim 1:5, 19; 4:2) seems to indicate that the opponents acted as the catalyst for this theological development. The unique contribution of the PD is the clear correlation between the response to the apostolic gospel and the condition of the human conscience. In these letters, the conscience is best understood as the internal instrument that translates belief into behavior. The very placement of συνείδησις here in 1:5, sandwiched between ἀγάπη (faith’s outworking in the Christian life) and πίστις (the posture of belief in Christ) is suggestive. The conscience is intended to translate the apostolic gospel into ἀγάπη-living. Thus, Paul can speak of believers as having a “good conscience.” It is “good” because it is working properly; their positive response to the gospel has made godliness for them a reality. In contrast, the opponents’ rejection of the gospel means that their consciences have been rendered ineffective. Their corrupt doctrine simply cannot be translated into godly living.

Ultimately for Paul, ἀγάπη will flow from the one who has “sincere faith” (πίστεως ἀνυποκρίτου). With this final part of the triad in v. 5, Paul makes clear the fact that ἀγάπη cannot be artificially manufactured. There can be no outer life pleasing to God without an inner posture of belief in and commitment to Christ (πίστις). Therefore, Timothy cannot achieve the τέλος of his commission apart from the proclamation of the apostolic gospel, which includes a call for repentance and faith. The adjective ἀνυπόκριτος stresses the integrity of the faith-commitment. From the occurrence of ἀνυπόκριτος in 2 Tim 1:5, we may say that “sincere faith” is one that stands the test of time. Where the opponents have deviated, those with authentic faith will endure.

2. The Opponents HaveMissed This Goal and Turned to a Powerless Message (v. 6)

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47 As pointed out by Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 119.
48 Similarly, Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 226–227, who states that “the conscience functions to direct, evaluate and control behaviour along lines set by given norms.” Also, Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 157, who explains, “[the conscience] functions to create an interface between the vertical (faith/knowledge) and horizontal (conduct) dimensions of the Christian life… it is the 'good conscience' that executes the transaction between faith/knowledge and action.”
49 See the further discussion of the opponents’ consciences in 4:1-5 below.
With the plural indefinite pronoun (τινες), Paul shifts the focus from Timothy back to the opponents. The verb ἀστοχέω appears only in the PD (1 Tim 1:6; 6:21; 2 Tim 2:18). The term is always used of the opponents, and probably carries the idea of “missing the mark.” Here in 1:6 the verb stands in contrast to the action implied in the previous verse; Timothy is aiming for love,50 but the opponents have missed the target (v. 6). 51 ἀστοχέω appears here as an adverbial participle of cause (“because they have missed”). The target the opponents have missed is indicated by the feminine plural relative pronoun (ὧν), which has as its antecedent the triad of inward faculties that produce ἀγάπη (v. 5). The opponents, in Paul’s present assessment, have not experienced genuine conversion; they are inwardly incapable of producing ἀγάπη, the outer life that is pleasing to God. Though they were previously perceived as being in good standing in the Christian community in Ephesus, Paul now speaks of these “certain ones” as individuals who have not responded positively to the gospel. Those who came in sheep’s clothing Paul now treats as ravenous wolves, though Paul still expects the wolves to acquiesce to the delegate (v. 3).

The main verb of v. 6, ἐκτρέπω, describes the effect of the opponents’ deviation. The verb occurs five times in the NT (1 Tim 1:6; 5:15; 6:20; 2 Tim 4:4; Heb 12:13), and in the PD it is applied on three occasions to those who turn away from the apostolic gospel (1 Tim 1:6; 5:15; 2 Tim 4:4).52 In 1:6, it is because the opponents have missed the mark (ἀστοχέω) of a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith that they have turned (ἐκτρέπω) to a goal of their own devising.53 Paul refers to the opponents’ point of arrival as µαταιολογία. The biblical hapax µαταιολογία54 has been translated a number of ways: “vain discussion” (RSV, ESV), “meaningless talk” (NRSV), “fruitless discussion”

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50 The action of aiming is implicit in the phrase τὸ δὲ τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας ἐστὶν ἀγάπη (v. 5).
51 With Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 166.
52 If I understand Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 371, correctly, he mistakenly claims that the verb is always used in the PD to refer to the change in direction that is the result of adherence to the false teaching. This is certainly the case here in 1 Tim 1:6, and it is true as well in 1 Tim 5:15 and in 2 Tim 4:4. However, in 1 Tim 6:20 the verb (appearing as a participle) is applied to Timothy.
53 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 120.
54 But see the cognate substantive µαταιολόγος in Titus 1:10 and the adjective µάταιος in Titus 3:9 and elsewhere in the NT.
(NASB), and “vain jangling” (KJV). Karris argues that ματαιολογία is a stock term, but a closer examination of vv. 5-6 will reveal that Paul has a precise meaning in mind.

Because of where ματαιολογία is nestled, it is probably best translated as “empty speech.” The immediate context is the key to rightly understanding this abstruse word. Paul has just indicated that the opponents have missed the mark of the inward faculties that produce ἄγάπη. These opponents are inwardly incapable because they have rejected the apostolic gospel (vv. 3-4); thus, the gospel, we may say, is the “full speech” or “powerful speech,” for it is the message that renders the inward faculties capable of pleasing God (v. 5). In contrast, the opponents have turned to “empty speech” or “powerless speech.” When Paul calls the opponents’ message ματαιολογία, he is not merely saying to the Christian community: “These words are a waste of time.” Rather, he is issuing a serious warning: “These words lack the power to transform.”

If we comb the NT for other words in this cognate group, we find that the adjective μάταιος can be used similarly. In 1 Cor 15:17, Paul writes: “And if Christ has

55 Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 557.
57 This should not be understood as a denial of the role of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of the individual. For Paul, the apostolic gospel and the Holy Spirit are inseparably linked in conversion (undisputed: Gal 3:1-6, 14; 1 Thess 1:5-6; disputed: Eph 1:13), though here he chooses to emphasize the gospel message, as he does in Rom 10:14-17 and in Col 1:5-6. We could bring out the implicit pneumatology of 1 Tim 1:5-6 by restating my assertion as follows. The gospel is the “full speech” or “powerful speech” because it is the only message that is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit to convert the sinful individual and make him or her capable of pleasing God. The role of the Spirit will be emphasized in 2 Tim 3:5 (see the discussion in chapter five).
58 This is an example of what I referred to in the previous chapter as the adaptation of a label or hackneyed phrase. In the Pauline writings, we often find the appropriation of terms for theological purposes. In essence, Paul baptized common terms. For what is in my view an astute discussion of semantic change in the NT, see Moisés Silva, Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 75-81.
59 On the one hand, D.A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 28–31, warns against the type of dissection I am doing here (μάταιος, λόγος). He uses the example, which he borrows from J.P. Louw, Semantics of New Testament Greek (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1982), 27, of deriving the meaning of “pineapple” from “pine” and “apple.” Carson states: “Even those of us who have never been to Hawaii recognize that pineapples are not a special kind of apple that grows on pines” (28). On the other hand, however, Carson suggests: “The meaning of a word may reflect the meanings of its component parts” (31, emphasis added). In addition,
not been raised, your faith is empty/futile (μάταιος) and you are still in your sins.”

Moreover, when Paul heals the crippled man in Lystra, and the confused crowd explains the healing with the exclamation, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men” (Acts 14:11), Paul and Barnabas respond: “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news (εὐαγγελίζω), that you should turn from these empty things (μάταιος, clearly referring back to the pagan explanation of the healing) to a living God…” (Acts 14:15). If we look for ματαιολογία in later Christian literature, we find that the term can be set in contrast to the gospel message, which further demonstrates the meaning I suggest for the word in 1 Tim 1:6. Polycarp, for example, writes: “Therefore, bind up your loose robes and serve as God’s slaves in reverential fear and truth, abandoning futile reasoning (ματαιολογίαν)... and believing in the one who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead…” (Pol. Phil 2.1).

To say here in 1 Tim 1:6 that the opponents have turned to ματαιολογία is to say that they are immersed in a message that is impotent to transform the inner person and thereby powerless to produce the godly life.60

3. The Opponents’ Ambition is to Instruct Others, Though They Themselves are Ignorant (v. 7)

The “certain ones” who have turned to this powerless message are further described in v. 7. They “aspire to be teachers of the law” (θέλοντες εἶναι νομοδιδάσκαλοι). Where Timothy’s goal is the proclamation of the apostolic gospel, the message that will

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James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 107-160, provides us with a thorough discussion of etymology. He concludes, “If we argued that all the words we use should be interpreted from their etymological background and remote historical connections we should reduce language to an unintelligible chaos” (113-114), but Barr does point out the value of etymological considerations when dealing with words of rare occurrence (158). Most germane is Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*, 39, who defines etymology as the area of linguistic study that seeks to determine the origins of particular words, and argues that origins can be interpreted in a number of ways. “In the first place,” Silva suggests, “the investigator may simply be interested in identifying the component parts of a word” (emphasis original). Synthetic languages like Greek are especially susceptible to this type of study, which does not necessarily take us to primitive times (semantic development), for a Greek writer may coin a compound at the moment of writing (39). In light of the context in which the hapax ματαιολογία occurs, it seems that the compound does reflect the meanings of its parts.

60 With De Villiers, “‘Empty Talk’ in 1 Timothy in the Light of Its Graeco-Roman Context,” 144–145. The message of opponents is characterized as “empty” in Eph 5:6 (κενοῖς λόγοις) and in Col 2:8 (κενῆς ἀπάτης) as well.
produce the godly life, the opponents’ ambition (θέλω) is to advance their deviant doctrine, for which they find support in the law. The term νομοδιδάσκαλος is well attested in the later literature (e.g., Plutarch, Cat. Maj. 20.4, νομοδιδάκτης; Irenaeus, Haer. 1.1.5; Clement, Exc. 1.5.5; Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 1.8). But the word is rare in the NT, occurring only two other times, both in reference to Jewish teachers. In Luke 5:17, the law-teachers are paired with Pharisees (Φαρισαίοι καὶ νομοδιδάσκαλοι). In Acts 5:34, the term is used in reference to the Pharisee, Gamaliel (Φαρισαῖος ὄνοματι Γαμαλιὴλ, νομοδιδάσκαλος).

Given the previous mention of “myths and genealogies” in v. 4, the extended discussion of “the law” in vv. 8-11, and especially the connection between the catalog of sinners and the Decalogue (vv. 9-10), which will be demonstrated in the following chapter, it is highly unlikely that anything other than the teaching of the Law of Moses is in view here. But since the word νομοδιδάσκαλος scarcely occurs in the NT, we must beware of over-interpretation at this point. All we may say, based on the first part of v. 7, is that the opponents wanted an authoritative teaching position in the Pauline community, and that the OT law had an important place in their teaching activities.

The problem, Paul explains, is not that the opponents desire to use the law, but that they do not rightly understand the subject matter. νοσοῦντες is best classified as a concessive participle (“even though they do not understand”). The verb νοέω conveys a process of careful thought that leads to comprehension. In 2 Tim 2:7, Paul commands Timothy: “Think (νοέω) over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.” The opponents, however, have no understanding at all; the double negative, μὴ τε ... μὴ τε, is used here for rhetorical effect and stresses the totality of their ignorance. They do not comprehend the text they wield, so their conversations (λέγω) and dogmatic assertions (διαβεβαιόμαι) are aswarm with errors. Smith rightly points out

61 With Gunther, St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background, 65; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 166.
62 Schlarb, Die gesunde Lehre, 91, for example, says that the desire to be teachers of the law might indicate that the opponents are non-Jewish. Rengstorf, TDNT, s.v. “νομοδιδάσκαλος,” on the other hand, suggests the term is a Christian construction designed to mark off Jewish from Christian teachers. But Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 177n60, points out that νομοδιδάσκαλος does not necessarily prove the Jewish affiliation of the opponents, because “Scripture had become the common ground of Christians of any (previous) religious background.”
63 Following Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 372; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 27.
64 BDAG, s.v. “νοέω.”
that the verb διαβεβαιώμαι highlights the manner in which the opponents were teaching their deviant doctrine—they taught with a certain degree of forcefulness.66

C. Summary of the Pericope

First Timothy 1:3-7 seems to indicate that the opponents were previously perceived as being in good standing within the Pauline community in Ephesus (v. 3). However, Paul presently speaks of them as those who have not made a genuine faith-commitment (vv. 5-6). Despite the fact that they are now spoken of as unbelievers, the opponents are still under Timothy’s jurisdiction (v. 3). Perhaps the opponents still saw themselves as “Christians” or as “believers” and thus continued to claim their spot within the community of faith.67 Therefore, the opponents were really placing themselves under Timothy’s jurisdiction. Two important clues—the two terms in the διδάσκω word-group—encourage us to think in this direction. The term ἑτεροδιδάσκαλος (v. 3) reveals that the opponents had not only rejected the apostolic gospel, but they desired to promulgate their own deviant doctrine in place of it. The casting aside of the gospel did not content them; they sought to advance their own teaching within the community of faith. The word νομοδιδάσκαλος (v. 7) confirms that the OT had an important place in the opponents’ teaching activities. But their exegesis of the OT was faulty. The terms μυθος and γενεαλογία (v. 4) suggest that the opponents may have been interested in some sort of interweaving of biblical incidents and legendary expansions, but more than this cannot be said at this stage of the investigation. Regardless of their precise preoccupation, the opponents’ interpretation of the OT is associated with speculation (ἐκζήτησις, v. 4) that, according to Paul, is at odds with the redemptive arrangement of God that is by faith (μᾶλλον ἡ οἰκονομία θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει), and they are clamoring for a platform in the Christian community.

66 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 307.
67 With Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 211, who claims: “We should note that the opponents probably still saw themselves as Christians. They probably did not think they had ‘made shipwreck of their faith’ (1 Tim 1:19), but rather that their teaching was correct, and that the Pastor was mistaken.” See also Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 294-295, who states that the addressees of Timothy’s commanding activity had rejected the truth, “so spiritually they were outside the community,” though “they were probably still part of it as they were proving persuasive within the believing community and Timothy was still able to command them” (emphasis original).
II. Protection of the Gospel and Education of the Deviant Ones (1 Tim 1:18-20)

A notable shift in participants occurs in 1:18-20, from Christ Jesus and Paul (1:12-17) to Timothy (vv. 18-19a) and the opponents (vv. 19b-20). There is also a shift in time frame, with 1:18-20 visualizing the present crisis in Ephesus rather than recalling the past intervention of Christ (1:12-17). Here, Paul develops the delegate’s charge, which was first mentioned in the opening unit (1:3-7). He first invigorates Timothy for the battlefield by reminding him of his commissioning (vv. 18-19a). Paul then reminds Timothy of the precedent for handling opponents he himself established with Hymenaeus and Alexander (vv. 19b-20). This short unit furnishes us with important information about the way the faithful community was to respond to the opponents.

A. Timothy’s Commissioning is a Source of Strength as He Defends the Apostolic Gospel (vv. 18-19a)

Paul begins this section with a stern, yet affectionate address (τέκνον Τιμόθεε). He writes to his delegate as a father would write to a son, expecting obedience and providing encouragement. The demonstrative pronoun (οὗτος) refers back to 1:5, where the term παραγγελία was first used. Timothy’s general commission, and certainly the specific task of standing up to the opponents in Ephesus (1:3-4), is again in view. Paul now uses the verb παρατίθημι in reference to Timothy’s charge (παρατίθημι σοι). The verb and its cognates play a significant role in 1 and 2 Timothy. Christ Jesus appointed Paul (τίθημι, 1 Tim 1:12), Paul entrusts ministerial duties to his delegate (παρατίθημι, 1 Tim 1:18), and Timothy is told to entrust Paul’s doctrine to faithful people who will continue to proclaim

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69 Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 147, state: “This charge of 1:18 echoes the cognate verb of 1:3 and noun of 1:5, and the demonstrative emphatically specifies that passage” (emphasis original).
70 The term is used in three basic ways in the NT. First, the verb can simply refer to the setting of an object in front of someone. In Mark 6:41, the disciples set (παρατίθημι) food in front of a hungry crowd. Paul uses the term this way in 1 Cor 10:27. Second, it can refer to the expounding of a subject. In Matt 13:24, Jesus puts (παρατίθημι) a parable before the people. Finally, the term can refer to trusting something of value into the care of another. In 1 Pet 4:19, those believers who suffer according to God’s will are to trust (παρατίθημι) their souls to the faithful Creator. This is the way Paul employs the term in the PD; he uses it in the sense of conveyance, of passing on tasks or teaching (1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:2). Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 407–408, 726, rightly says that the task is emphasized in 1 Tim 1:18 and the teaching is highlighted in 2 Tim 2:2.
it in the future (παρατίθημι, 2 Tim 2:2); thus, the apostolic gospel is the deposit that is to be bequeathed and guarded (παραθήκη, 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12, 14).\(^{71}\)

In the second part of v. 18, it becomes clear why Paul once again refers to Timothy’s commission: he wants to encourage the delegate in his present task by reminding him of a significant past event. Paul reminds Timothy that his commission is in accordance with the prophecies that were previously made about him (κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σὲ προφητείας). This is the first of two clear references in the PD to prophecies concerning Timothy (1:18; 4:14). Here in 1:18, Paul mentions prophecies only (προφητεία), while in 1 Tim 4:14 he mentions gifting (χάρισμα), prophecies (προφητεία), and the laying on of hands (ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν). Though not explicit, these same prophecies are probably in view in 2 Tim 1:6, where Paul again speaks of the gift of God that is in Timothy through the laying on of hands. From these three passages we may safely deduce that a ritual of commissioning was at least fairly common in the early church.\(^{72}\) An early commissioning service is found in Acts 13:1-3. The believers were gathered for worship (v. 2a), the Holy Spirit indicated Barnabas and Saul (v. 2b),\(^{73}\) the community fasted, prayed, laid hands on the two indicated, and then dispatched them (v. 3). It seems that there was a similar process in Timothy’s case. He was set apart by the Spirit for a specific ministry (προφητεία),\(^{74}\) he was spiritually gifted for this work (χάρισμα), and he was sent out on mission with the blessing and support of the Christian

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\(^{71}\) See Trummer, *EDNT*, s.v. “παρατίθημι.”

\(^{72}\) To say that a ritual of commissioning was in place is not the same as affirming a complex process of ordination. Such a process, as argued for by Roloff, *Der Erste Brief an Timotheus*, 102, goes beyond the evidence of the text. With Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 409.

\(^{73}\) In Acts 13:2, Luke writes only “the Holy Spirit said” (ἐἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον). However, this is probably best understood as a reference to words that: 1) originated with the Spirit, and 2) were spoken by those in the worshiping community. Thus, we may understand the Spirit speaking in Acts 13:2 and the prophecies about Timothy in the PD to be comparable; in both cases it is the utterance of one who interprets the divine will or purpose that is in view. See BDAG, s.v. “προφητεία.”

\(^{74}\) For a discussion of the grammatical complexities associated with the phrase τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σὲ προφητείας in 1 Tim 1:18, see Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 409. He rightly concludes that the reference is to prophecies made about Timothy at some point in the past.
community (ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν). It is not possible to locate Timothy’s commissioning with certainty—the text is silent on the subject—and to fixate on the precise date and place is surely to miss the point. Here, the past event reminds the believers in Ephesus of Timothy’s authority and it functions as motivational material for the young delegate. Timothy is bound to his commission by the divine calling communicated to him in the context of the Christian community, and the same Spirit who set him apart for service will strengthen him in the difficult work he must do.

The purpose (τις) of Timothy’s commission is now given in military terms. In 1 Tim 1:3-4, Paul first stated the purpose of Timothy’s commission: confront the opponents. Now, Paul resumes and intensifies: the opponents must be confronted because they attack the apostolic gospel. Therefore, Timothy must be ready to “serve as a soldier in the good war” (στρατευόμενος ἑτῶν καλῆς στρατείας). Rather than the athletic metaphor, which Paul uses to emphasize general striving or discipline in the Christian life (undisputed: 1 Cor 9:24-27; disputed: 2 Tim 4:7-8), here he employs a military metaphor (see also 2 Cor 10:1-6; Eph 6:10-17), which draws attention to the need for defense against the adversaries. This is no friendly contest. A form of the verb στρατευόμενος (literally “to do military service” or “engage in a war”) is used in 2 Tim 2:4: “No one serving as a soldier (στρατευόμενος) gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.” The war in which Timothy is engaged is “good” (καλός) primarily because it is God who has drafted him and given him the task of defending the apostolic gospel. The feminine plural pronoun αὐταῖς refers back to the prophecies previously uttered about Timothy, and the preposition ἐν is used.

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75 For a discussion of Timothy's commissioning, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 70–72. See also his comments regarding the OT practice of the laying on of hands (261–263).


77 Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature*, NovTSup 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 158, points out the key difference between the military image and the athletic image: “In the picture of the Agon Paul emphasises the motif of the goal for which the ‘athlete’ strives; in the military picture, on the other hand, it is the thought of the enemy and the need to stand fast against his onslaughts which predominates.” See also Jerry M. Hullinger, “The Historical Background of Paul’s Athletic Allusions,” *BSac* 161 (2004): 343–359.
instrumentally. By recalling the divine words that set him apart as a soldier, Timothy will be encouraged in the war.

With the participial phrase ἐχων πίστιν καὶ ἀγαθήν συνείδησιν Paul brings the bolstering of Timothy’s commission to an end. The participle ἐχων could be classified as an adverbial participle of means, thus explaining how the action of the finite verb will be accomplished. But since in 1 Tim 1:5 “sincere faith” and “good conscience” signify the person who has been rendered capable of pleasing God (as discussed above) it seems best to classify the participle as causal, thus expressing the reason or ground of the action of the finite verb. ἔχω, in this context, means “to possess or contain.” It is because Timothy possesses (ἔχω) a sincere faith and a good conscience, because he has been rendered inwardly capable, that he will be able to serve faithfully as a soldier (στρατεύω).

B. Those Who Oppose the Apostolic Gospel Must Be Disciplined (vv. 19b-20)

Paul next sets Timothy’s commission in contrast to some (τινες) who have “shipwrecked.” The shipwreck (ναυαγέω) was a common image in the ancient world (e.g., Philo, Dreams 2.147; Names 215). Here, Paul uses the aorist verb ἐναυάγησαν to signify a great calamity that has already taken place. These opponents have suffered disaster “with reference to the faith” (περὶ τὴν πίστιν). The verb ναυαγέω is consistently intransitive, so this is probably not a reference to the opponents causing something to be shipwrecked (transitive). Thus the phrase περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἐναυάγησαν should be translated either “some have suffered shipwreck concerning their faith” or “some have suffered shipwreck so far as the Christian faith is concerned.” The prepositional phrase περὶ τὴν πίστιν occurs two other times in the PD (1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 3:8), and both times the content of faith, rather than personal faith, is in view. So it seems that the point here is not that “the personal and

78 With Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 71, who suggests that Paul's point is either: 1) Timothy will be inspired by the prophecies, or 2) the gifting that accompanied the prophecies will be Timothy's weapon of warfare.
79 With Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 157.
80 See, for example, Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 157. He suggests, “Paul returns to the profile of authentic Christian existence in 1:5 to underline the means by which Timothy will be able to wage the good war.”
81 BDAG, s.v. “ἔχω.”
82 For various translations and discussion of this somewhat ambiguous prepositional phrase, see Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 412; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 58; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 67.
83 The verb does not take an object but can take prepositional phrases that specify the context. See the list of references provided by Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 33n12.
subjective belief of the immoral heterodox has finally snapped and come apart.\textsuperscript{84} Rather, the point is that these opponents have suffered shipwreck with reference to the objective content of the Christian faith. They traveled the wide channel with the strong current leading to destruction.

The adverbial participle ἀπωθέω (“to reject”) tells us how the calamity occurred. The antecedent of the feminine singular relative pronoun ἥν is the ἁγαθὴν συνειδήσιν Paul has just mentioned. It is “by rejecting the good conscience” that these opponents have “shipwrecked.” The verb ἀπωθέω refers to a conscious act of rejection, rather than to some passive drifting off course.\textsuperscript{85} The verb occurs only twice in the Pauline corpus (Rom 11:1; 1 Tim 1:19). In Rom 11:1, the undisputed Paul employs erotesis to make the point that God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Whereas in 1 Tim 1:5-6 it is said that the opponents have “missed the mark” (ἀστοχέω) of the triad of inward faculties that produce ἁγάπη—a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith—here in 1 Tim 1:19b it is only said that some have “rejected” or “dismissed” one of these inward faculties, the good conscience. Though slightly different terminology is used in v. 19, the point is probably the same as in vv. 5-6. Since Paul has already clarified that the “good conscience” is the one that translates the apostolic gospel into ἁγάπη-living, when he states here that these opponents have rejected the good conscience, he also means that they have not responded positively to the gospel and are therefore not enabled for godly living. The root error is the rejection of Paul’s gospel, which means that their consciences will not work properly, and their conduct will not be pleasing to God.\textsuperscript{86}

In v. 20, Paul rather unusually singles out two men from among this larger group of shipwrecked opponents (ἂν ἐστίν). The name Hymenaeus surfaces again in 2 Tim 2:17, and the name Alexander comes up several times in connection with Ephesus (Acts 19:33-34; 2 Tim 4:14-15). But we cannot know exactly how many people are referred to in these texts. In a city with a population of over 200,000 there were bound to be multiple

\textsuperscript{84} Quinn and Wacker, \textit{The First and Second Letters to Timothy}, 155.
\textsuperscript{85} Mounce, \textit{Pastoral Epistles}, 67.
\textsuperscript{86} With Marshall, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 412; Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus}, 158–159.
people with the same name. Perhaps Paul refers to the Alexander of 2 Tim 4:14-15 as “Alexander the coppersmith” in order to set him apart from the Alexander here in 1 Tim 1:20. There is also uncertainty regarding what precisely it was that made these men worthy of special mention. Why would Paul replace the customary indefinite pronoun with proper nouns at this point in the letter? Does Paul name leaders of the opposition? Does he name the individuals who have most severely erred? Or, could it be that Paul just names the opponents he knows personally? All three theories are possible, but none of them are necessary to understand Paul’s point. Regardless of the exact role Hymenaeus and Alexander played, Paul mentions them synecdochically here. He states the species but intends the genus; he uses these two specific opponents to make a much wider point: Timothy must deal appropriately with the false teachers in Ephesus. As Roloff suggests: “Die Kirchenzuchtmaßnahmen, die Paulus in einsamer Autorität gegen die beiden getroffen haben soll, wollen ein konkretes Modell für das Verfahren der Gemeindeleiter gegenüber Irrlehrern setzen.”

The concrete model Paul puts forth for Timothy has been the subject of much debate. Paul says that these two men were “delivered to Satan” (παρέδωκα τῷ σατανᾷ), and that the purpose (ἵνα) of this delivery was that “they might be instructed not to blaspheme” (παιδεύσιν μὴ βλασφημεῖν). This is the only occurrence of παράδιδωμι (“to deliver” or “to give over”) in the PD, though the verb occurs often in the undisputed Pauline letters. The closest parallel is 1 Cor 5:5, where Paul tells the Corinthian believers

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87 According to Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 17, Ephesus was probably the third largest city in the Empire after Rome and Alexandria, with a population of somewhere between 200,000-250,000.
88 With Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 413.
89 This is the view of Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 59, who says that Hymenaeus and Alexander “are almost certainly leaders, therefore probably elders.” See also Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 67.
90 As suggested by Walter Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 8. Lock claims there was a subgroup characterized by severity; Paul only names the extremists.
91 Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 106.
92 I share the sentiment of Richard H. Bell, Deliver Us from Evil: Interpreting the Redemption from the Power of Satan in New Testament Theology, WUNT 216 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 284: “[Satan] is not a ‘mere symbol’ and neither is he simply a ‘figure of speech.’ Further he has an ontological status which goes beyond a figure from a fairy tale such as ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and a status which goes beyond the mythical figures of ‘Persephone’ or ‘Heracles.’” Bell rightly argues that Satan has this ontological status because, according to the NT witnesses, Christ defeats Satan. Satan’s reality depends upon that of Christ, the ultimate reality (355).
to deliver a man living in sexual immorality over to Satan (παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιούτον τῷ σατανᾷ). Here as well Paul provides the purpose of this disciplinary action: “so that the spirit might be saved on the day of the Lord” (ἳνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου). In both 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy Paul probably draws from the prologue to Job. In Job 1:6-12, Satan disputes the blamelessness of Job and seeks Yahweh’s permission to test Job’s integrity. Yahweh allows Satan to first attack Job’s most prized possessions (1:12). After the first attack fails, Satan asks for Yahweh’s permission to assault Job physically. Then in Job 2:6 LXX, the LORD says to Satan, “Behold, I deliver him to you” (Ἰδοὺ παραδίδωμι σοι αὐτόν). Yahweh places only one limitation on Satan: “Spare his life” (μόνον τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ διαφύλαξον). Pertinent for our discussion is the fact that the Joban Satan is more than just an adversary; he reports to Yahweh and does his bidding. Yahweh uses Satan as an instrument for accomplishing his good purposes.

In both 1 Cor 5:5 and 1 Tim 1:20 it is clear that Paul views Satan as an enemy of God who nevertheless can play the part of an ally in the process of ecclesial discipline. Thus, when Paul calls for the Corinthian to be handed over to Satan, he does so with the hope that by turning the rebel back into Satan’s sphere, outside the edifying and encouraging environment of the church where the Spirit of God is at work, the flesh will be destroyed and the so-called brother will experience genuine conversion (τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ).

93 For a discussion of Satan in the OT, the NT, and ancient Judaism, see Bell, Deliver Us from Evil, 10–23.
95 Page, “Satan: God’s Servant,” 452.
96 It should be stressed that Satan does not cease to be God’s adversary, for his motives do not align with God’s. But in the same way that God used the evil actions of Joseph’s brothers for good (Gen 50:20), he can use the evil motives of Satan to carry out his good purposes.
In 1 Tim 1:20, Paul uses παιδεύω, a verb employed five times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: 1 Cor 11:32; 2 Cor 6:9; disputed: 1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:25; Titus 2:12). The term refers to a process of education or correction. In 2 Tim 2:25, Paul urges Timothy “to educate (παιδεύω) the opponents” with the understanding that “God may grant them repentance to a knowledge of truth.” Here in 1 Tim 1:20, Paul states that Hymenaeus and Alexander need “to be educated (παιδεύω)” and the primary thing they need to learn is “not to blaspheme (βλασφημέω).” Since the fundamental sin in view is false teaching, βλασφημέω should be understood in the religious sense; it refers to slander or misrepresentation of the Christian faith. Paul’s expectation appears to be that by placing these two men outside the church and into the hands of Satan they will repent of their sin and become “former blasphemers,” like Paul himself (1 Tim 1:13: τὸ πρότερον ὄντα βλάσφημον). He hopes for the alignment of these two men with the apostolic gospel. Thus, when we combine 1 Tim 1:20 and 2 Tim 2:25, we get a picture of Satan and Timothy actually working together for the conversion of the opponents in Ephesus.

C. Summary of the Pericope

In 1 Tim 1:18-20, Paul expands on Timothy’s charge, which was first mentioned in 1:3-4. Paul first reminds Timothy of his commissioning. By recalling the divine words that set him apart as a soldier, Timothy will be encouraged in his difficult work in Ephesus (vv. 18-19a). Paul next provides Timothy with a concrete example of church discipline. He uses two specific opponents from his past—Hymenaeus and Alexander—to establish a model for the delegate. Though other oppositional units in 1 and 2 Timothy must still be considered, the disciplinary process outlined in 1 Tim 1:19b-20 (and in the parallel passage 1 Cor 5:1-5) appears to be as follows. A person within the Christian community begins to behave in ways that are in stark contrast with the apostolic gospel (1 Cor 5:1; 1 Tim 1:19b-20a). Since this person’s behavior is not congruous with the gospel, the individual is treated like one who has not experienced genuine conversion. He or she

98 BDAG, s.v. “παιδεύω.”
100 With Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 186; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 52; Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 212-213.
101 Theodore of Mopsuestia writes, “I have excluded them (he says) from the church, not to preclude their being set right, but quite expecting this to happen, if in any way improved by rebuke they may learn not to slander, but may be turned back to the truth” (Comm. 1 Tim 1:20). See also Brian S. Rosner, “Drive Out the Wicked Person: A Biblical Theology of Exclusion,” EvQ 71 (1999): 25–36, who argues persuasively for the hope of restoration and prospect of salvation in cases of exclusion found in Scripture.
is no longer considered to be within the Christian community and is considered to be with Satan (1 Cor 5:5a; 1 Tim 1:20b). Thus, this person becomes a target of the church’s mission and will hopefully be rescued from the domain of darkness by genuinely responding to the gospel (1 Cor 5:5b; 1 Tim 1:20c). For Paul, the goal of church discipline is repentance. He delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan with the desire that they would be saved. Timothy is to follow this same disciplinary process with the deviant ones in Ephesus, and he is to do so with the same hope, the hope that they will turn to the healthy teaching.

III. Evil Doctrines, Erroneous Practices, and a Good Creation (1 Tim 4:1-5)

Immediately following his description of the church as “a pillar and support of the truth” (3:15), Paul warns of those who, rather than standing firm, will fall prey to “seductive spirits and demonic doctrines” (4:1). The warning of 1 Tim 4:1-3 contains very specific information about the content of the opponents’ instruction. In the ensuing verses, Paul counteracts the false teaching with a reading of Gen 1-2 (vv. 3b-5). Thus, the unit provides us with valuable details about the opponents’ doctrines/practices while also providing us with an instance of Paul’s theological refutation.

A. The Opponents in Ephesus Are Among the Eschatological Enemies of God (vv. 1-2)

1. The Opponents’ Message Originates in the Evil Spiritual Realm (v. 1)

This pericope is closely connected to 3:14-16.102 The church has been entrusted with the truth of the gospel (3:15-16); however (δὲ), some will surely abandon this truth (4:1). According to Paul, “the Spirit clearly says that in later times some will depart from the faith.” πνεῦμα should be understood as a reference to the Holy Spirit; the prophetic role of the Spirit is reflected elsewhere in the NT (Acts 11:27-28; 21:11; Rev 2:7-3:22).103

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This is the only reference in 1 Timothy to the present work (λέγει) of the Holy Spirit.\(^{104}\) His function here is to convey a clear prophetic word. The adverb ῥητῶς is a NT hapax, though it occurs often in the contemporary and later literature (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 1.24; Justin, *I Apol.* 35.10; 54.7; 63.11). The meaning here is most likely “explicitly” or “precisely.”\(^{105}\) In contrast to the deceitful or seductive spirits (πνεῦμα πλάνας), the Holy Spirit reliably and perspicuously communicates.\(^{106}\) We are not, however, told how the Spirit conveys the prophetic word. Paul could have in mind a prophetic word revealed recently and directly to him (e.g., Acts 16:9; 18:9-10; 20:29-30). Another option is that the reference is to divine revelation that has circulated in the church for quite some time. The latter choice seems more likely since this is no innovative message; Jesus uttered similar words during his earthly ministry (e.g., Matt 24:3-14; Mark 13:3-23).\(^{107}\)

In the PD, Paul uses the phrases “later times” (ὑστεροις ἡμέραις) and “last days” (ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, 2 Tim 3:1) to refer to the church age, the epoch in which the future age has invaded the present evil age in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.\(^{108}\) Similar references are found throughout the NT. In Acts 2:17, Peter interprets the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost as a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy and as a sign of living in


\(^{105}\) BDAG, s.v. “ῥητῶς.”

\(^{106}\) Pietersen, *The Polemic of the Pastors*, 120, says the opening of 1 Tim 4:1 is evidence for the charismatic nature of the opponents: “It may well be that the opponents couched their language in terms of τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει to which our author replies τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ῥητῶς λέγει.” It seems more likely, however, that the point of the phrase is to distinguish emphatically the seductive spirits from the Holy Spirit, who is indeed trustworthy.

\(^{107}\) Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 769.

\(^{108}\) See Philip H. Towner, “The Present Age in the Eschatology of the Pastoral Epistles,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 427–448. Towner explains: “The age of the church is thought to have its point of origin in the Christ event and its consummation in his future appearance, [so] the church age becomes clearly die Zwischenzeit. Bound at either end by the epiphany of Christ, each casting its light over the present, one forward and one backward, the interim must be understood christocentrically” (439). See also James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 464, who explains that, for Paul, the church exists in a gap opened up between the two comings of Christ, a gap in which “the present age” and “the age to come” overlap. Dunn contends: “The beginning of the age to come is pulled back into the present age, to begin with Christ’s resurrection. But the present age has not yet ended, and will persist until the parousia.” It is this overlapping period that Paul has in mind when he uses the phrases “later times” (ὑστεροις καιροῖς) and “last days” (ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις).
“the last days” (ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις). In Heb 1:2 and in 1 Pet 1:20 the last days are connected with the Christ event. The message that the last days will be teeming with evil is common in the NT as well (e.g., 2 Thess 2:3-12; Jude 17-18; 2 Pet 3:3-7). The shift in 1 Tim 4 from the future to the present tense indicates that Paul is offering an eschatological reading of the present situation in Ephesus. Dibelius and Conzelmann contend: “The very fact that the mention of the false teaching is directly continued by its refutation (4:3-5) shows that the author regards it as a present danger.”

During this eschatological time of salvation “some will depart from the faith” (ἀποστήσονται τινες τῆς πίστεως). Paul uses the verb ἀφίστημι only three times (undisputed: 2 Cor 12:8; disputed: 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 2:19); it refers generally to the process of moving away from a certain reference point. Since τῆς πίστεως is set in contrast to διδασκαλίας δαμονίων, πίστις should again be understood as objective content. The reference point in view here is the Christian faith. In Heb 3:12 the author warns that it is the one with a “wicked, unbelieving heart” (καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας) who departs (ἀφίστημι) from the living God. In the same way, the opponents in Ephesus have missed the mark of a “pure heart” (καθαρᾶς καρδίας, 1 Tim 1:5), and have turned away from the objective content of the Christian faith. Though some interpreters argue that τινες refers not to the deceivers (the false teachers themselves) but to those being deceived (individuals within the household of God), the following phrase, which is closely parallel to the language used to describe the opponents in 1 Tim 1:3-4, makes it clear that the false teachers are once again meant by the plural indefinite pronoun.

Paul first used the verb προσέχω of the opponents in 1 Tim 1:4: they are “preoccupied (προσέχειν) with stories and endless accounts of ancestries.” Here again the term carries connotations of strong influence or control (see also Titus 1:14). προσέχοντες should be construed as an adverbial participle of means; thus, the second half of v. 1 may

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109 With the majority of recent commentators, including Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 98; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 538; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 234; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 288-289; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 89. See also Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 259; Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 223.

110 Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 64.

111 BDAG, s.v. “ἀφίστημι.”

112 With Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 90.

113 For explanations of this view, see Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 97; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 538.

114 With Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 239.
be translated, “by being devoted to seductive spirits and demonic doctrines.” In what is one of the strongest statements in the letters, Paul now expresses that the opponents have turned from the Christian faith to Satanic teaching. Paul uses two phrases to explain that Satan is the ultimate source of the false teaching in Ephesus. First, he uses the plural πνεύμασιν with the qualifier πλάνοις to distinguish emphatically the seductive spirits from the Holy Spirit, who is the trustworthy author of this prophecy (v. 1a). The message the opponents promulgate originates in the evil spiritual realm. Because of the origin of the message, Paul says, secondly, the content is to be classified as διδασκαλίας δαιμονίων.

The noun δαιμόνιον is found in the Pauline corpus only here and in 1 Cor 10:20, but the word occurs abundantly in the NT, and the structure of 4:1 indicates that the “spirits” and the “demons” in view here are synonymous. Again the plural form (διδασκαλίας) is used to create an intentional contrast, this time with the singularity and authority of the apostolic gospel. As Thomas Schreiner says, “Paul does not teach that his opponents are sincere and humane people who merely have a difference of opinion. He is persuaded that they are evil when measured by the gospel’s standard.” Paul is uncompromisingly forthright on this point. The opponents are demonic middlemen; they are human minions who have accepted and now mediate the lies of Satan (compare 2 Cor 11:3, 13-15).

115 There is a certain alliterative unity in 4:1 (πνεύμασιν πλάνοις καὶ διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων), which I have maintained in my translation. With Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 352.
116 For a similar use of “spirit,” see Luke 4:36; 1 Pet 3:19; 1 John 4:1-6; Rev. 16:14; 18:2; T. Reu. 2.1-2; T. Sim. 6.6; T. Jud. 14.8; T. Dan 5.5-6; T. Benj. 3.3; 1QS 5:18-22; CD 2:17-18; 1QpHab 10.9.
117 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 770; idem, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 98: “The deceiving spirits and things taught by demons, which some will follow, probably refer to the same reality—the demonic nature of teaching that opposes the gospel.” See also the collocation of “spirits” and “demons” in Rev 16:14: εἰς ἅμα πνεύματα δαιμονίων ποιοῦντα σημεία.
118 With Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 290.
120 Johnson, “The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic,” 419–441, has shown that this type of allegation was common in first-century polemics, but Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 290, is right to conclude: “The temptation to write this off as rhetoric should be resisted.” See also David J. Downs, “Early Catholicism and Apocalypticism in the Pastoral Epistles,” CBQ 67 (2005):
This explains why Timothy is told to engage in warfare against them (1:18-20). The war between the apostolic delegate and these deviant teachers is ultimately a spiritual struggle (compare Eph 6:10-12).

2. The Opponents’ Consciences and Lives Bear Satan’s Mark (v. 2)

After underlining the Satanic origin of the opponents’ content (v. 1b), Paul next describes the opponents’ condition (v. 2). The prepositional phrase, ἐν ὑποκρίσει ψευδολόγων, is ambiguous, but the best translation solution is to begin a new sentence at v. 2: “In hypocrisy they speak falsely,” or “Such doctrines come through hypocritical liars.” The phrase shifts the attention from the Satanic nature of the teaching to the human minions who promulgate it. The term ὑπόκρισις is rather uncommon in the NT, and is used only twice in the Pauline writings (undisputed: Gal 2:13; disputed: 1 Tim 4:2). Spicq traces the semantic evolution of this word-group from Homer and Herodutus to the NT. The change is interesting. The verb ὑποκρίνομαι can mean “to answer” (Homer, Od. 2.111), “to interpret” (Homer, Od. 19.535), or “to declaim a text/play a theatrical role” (Demosthenes, Cor. 15). The actor practices the art of illusion. A man playing the role of Agamemnon is not really Agamemnon, but pretends to be. It is not a large leap from this meaning—the art of illusion—to the meaning we find in Christian literature—the practice of deception. Pretense is the common denominator. The verb ὑποκρίνομαι is used in Luke 20:20 for those who practice deception. So too the noun ὑπόκρισις is used of deceptive conduct in the Gospels (Matt 23:28; Mark 12:15; Luke 12:1). These texts, and especially the contrast between ἐξωθεν (the “outside” of a person) and ἐσωθεν (the “inside” of a person) in Matt 23:28, make it clear that on the most basic level the word ὑπόκρισις is used in Christian literature to denote deception. Hence, Paul

657-658, who says, “Given the importance of cosmic imagery elsewhere in the Pastorals, there is little indication that this language is purely rhetorical; rather, the Pastor understands Satan and his demonic powers to lie at the root of the heresy facing his churches.” As John sees only children of God and children of the devil (1 John 3:10), so Paul sees only servants of Christ and servants of Satan.

122 For a discussion of the possible forces of ἐν here, see Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 539.

123 As suggested by Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 238–239.

124 As suggested by Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 287. This is probably the best translation because it allows for a smooth connection with the adjoining participial phrase.

125 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 291.

126 See TLNT, s.v. “ὑπόκρισις.”
combines ὑπόξρισις with the term ψευδολόγος ("liar"; NT hapax; see Josephus, Ant. 8.410) here in 1 Tim 4:2 to accentuate an important point: the opponents are not who they say they are. Perhaps this is a reference to the same trickery that surfaced in the opening section of the letter. Though Paul now speaks of the opponents as those who are not genuine believers (1 Tim 1:5-6), the opponents still claim their spot within the Christian community (1 Tim 1:3), and they clamor for a teaching position so they can expound the law (1 Tim 1:7). They are Christian pretenders.

The description of the opponents’ condition continues with a participial clause (κεκαυστηριασμένων τὴν ἰδίαν συνείδησιν). The perfect participle indicates an enduring condition, but the force of the verb here is debated. καυστηρίζω is undocumented elsewhere in the NT or the LXX, and is practically unknown to secular Greek before the PD (Strabo, Geogr. 5.1.9, has the non-sigma spelling). The verb refers literally to cauterizing a wound, or to branding an animal, slave, or criminal. Here, Paul uses the verb figuratively (hypocatastasis); the conscience is implicitly compared to skin that has been scorched by a hot iron. More specifically, this could mean that the conscience has been seared, so it is insensitive or ineffective. Or, it could mean that Satan has branded the conscience, so it carries his stamp of ownership. It is possible that Paul intends the latter image as an extension of the former: the opponents’ consciences are ineffective.

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128 The perfect form (κεκαυστηριασμένων) and the alternate spellings of the verb (καυστηρίζω or καυστηρίδζω) gave rise to the following textual variants: 1) a misreading of the reduplicated participle as καί καυστηριασμένων (F 0241 etc.), and 2) the non-sigma spelling of the participle, κεκαυστηριασμένων (C D G I etc.). The reading of NA is well attested (א א L etc.) and is the more difficult reading, since the sigma spelling of the verb is less common. At any rate, the variants are differences of spelling that do not alter the meaning. See J.K. Elliott, The Greek Text of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, Studies and Documents XXXVI (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1968), 62.
(seared); therefore, they are viewed as belonging to Satan (branded). This solution harmonizes well with the explanation of “conscience” that was offered above (1 Tim 1:3-7). The “conscience,” I argued, is the internal instrument that, when working properly, translates the apostolic gospel into ἀγάπη-living. At the same time, this solution takes seriously the immediately preceding words about the opponents’ association with Satan (1 Tim 4:1). Finally, it is consistent with 1 Tim 1:18-20, where rejection or distortion of the apostolic gospel means that one has sided with Satan. From the previous evidence in the letter we may deduce that here again the opponents’ rejection of the apostolic gospel is what Paul primarily has in mind. Since they have rejected the gospel, their consciences have been rendered ineffective. Their demonic beliefs cannot be translated into godly behavior. Thus, their consciences and their lives bear Satan’s mark.

B. The Opponents Promote Asceticism; Paul Counters with Creationism (vv. 3-5)

1. The Opponents Enforce Abstinence from Marriage and Select Foods (v. 3a)

Paul continues the description of the opponents in v. 3, though now the focus shifts from their condition to the extreme practices they promote. The grammar of v. 3a is complex. The verb κωλύω generally means “to keep something from happening.” The undisputed Paul uses the verb to indicate that he was “hindered” in his travels and ministry (Rom 1:13; 1 Thess 2:16). He also uses the verb when he issues the command to the Corinthians: do not “forbid” speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:39). Here in 1 Tim 4:3 the participle and first infinitive (κωλυόντων γαμήν) may simply be translated “they are forbidding marriage.” By forbidding marriage (γαμέω, “to take another person as spouse”) the opponents probably were requiring abstinence from sexual activity.

The grammatical difficulty arises as we move to the second infinitive, ἀπέχεσθαι. The verb ἀπέχω is used here as it is used elsewhere (1 Thess 4:3; 5:22); the sense is “to abstain.” But the preceding participle, translated “forbidding,” makes little sense with this second infinitive (“forbidding to abstain”?). Most likely, this should be classified as a zeugma: “a special type of ellipsis requiring a different verb to be supplied.” Paul must have assumed his readers would take a hint from the supplied participle, κωλυόντων, and

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132 Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 114, also suggests a combination of the images.
133 BDAG, s.v. “κωλύω.”
135 BDF §479.2.
fill in the blank with κελευντων (“ordering”). Hence, the second phrase may be translated “ordering people to abstain from certain foods.” The noun βρωμα refers to solid foods. The undisputed Paul uses βρωμα in contrast to γαλα (“milk”) in 1 Cor 3:2. The term here is necessarily a synecdoche of the genus, where a word of wider meaning is used for a narrower sense, since abstaining from all foods would lead to certain death. We cannot be certain, however, what narrower sense Paul had in mind. William Lane takes βρωμα as a reference to meat, but this is perhaps too bold. If the opponents were calling for abstinence from all meat, it is likely that the term χρεας would have been used here (as in Rom 14:21; 1 Cor 8:13; eighty-seven occurrences in the LXX).

Like the myths and genealogies of 1 Tim 1:4, the marriage prohibition and dietary regulations of 1 Tim 4:3 have served as the catalyst for all sorts of hypothesizing. It will be necessary for me to interact with a selection of these hypotheses. I will begin with the theories that rely on second-century (or later) parallels.

Some commentators find in v. 3 a “Gnostic” or “proto-Gnostic” dualism. It is claimed that second-century “Gnostics” were known to practice the type of asceticism found here in 1 Timothy. The followers of Saturninus, for example, declared: “marriage and generation are from Satan” (Irenaeus, Haer. 1.24.2; see also Epiphanius, Pan. 45.2.1). Irenaeus also speaks of a group springing from Saturninus and Marcion. The so-called Encomrates preached against marriage and “introduced abstinence from animate food, thus proving themselves ungrateful to God, who formed all things” (Haer. 1.28).

Jesse Sell has focused on The Book of Thomas the Contender and proposed four connections between this Nag Hammadi tractate and the PD. 1) The single most important element in the basic teaching of The Book of Thomas the Contender is anti-sexual asceticism, which Sell links to 1 Tim 4:1-5. 2) According to Sell, food-related

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136 Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 190.
138 Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 190, claims that βρωμα and χρεας are used interchangeably in 1 Cor 8:13, but I find it more likely that Paul moves from the wider term, “food,” to the more specific term, “meat,” at the end of 1 Cor 8 because meat would have been the most difficult kind of food to come by without some questionable history, since the large majority of meat available in the market would have been previously offered to an idol. See Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 394.
139 See, for example, Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 236; Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 114–117; Thielman, Theology of the New Testament, 410.
asceticism is implicit in the tractate and explicit in 1 Tim 4:1-5. 3) A crucial element of the basic teaching of The Book of Thomas the Contender is the view that the Savior does not desire the salvation of all men, which Sell connects to the call for prayer in 1 Tim 2:1-7. 4) The desire for esoteric knowledge plays a minor role in the Nag Hammadi text, and Sell suggests it plays a role in the PD as well (especially in 1 Tim 6:20-21).\footnote{Jesse Sell, \textit{The Knowledge of the Truth—Two Doctrines: The Book of Thomas the Contender (CG II.7) and the False Teachers in the Pastoral Epistles} (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982), 69–71. Sell’s conclusion is that we find in the group responsible for \textit{The Book of Thomas the Contender} “a historical witness to an actually attested ideology bearing remarkable resemblance to the most important aspects of the teachings attacked as ‘false’ by the Pastorals” (79). For him, this particular Nag Hammadi text is an “ideological descendant of those teachings attacked by the Pastorals” (80).}

All these “Gnostic” sources, however, are quite late.\footnote{For example, The Book of Thomas the Contender was most likely composed roughly a century after the PD. See Marvin Meyer, ed., \textit{The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts} (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 236.}

The apocryphal Acts bear witness to the development of Christian ascetic groups.\footnote{Pointed out by Marshall, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 534. See also the discussion in John Young, \textit{The Theology of the Pastoral Letters}, 15-20.}

In the \textit{Acts of Paul and Thecla}, for example, the author provides the following description of Paul’s teaching: “And after Paul had gone into the house of Onesiphorus there was great joy and bowing of knees and breaking of bread and the word of God about abstinence and the resurrection. Paul said, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; blessed are those who have kept the flesh chaste, for they shall become a temple of God’” (\textit{Acts of Paul and Thecla 5}, emphasis added). It is Paul’s “discourse of virginity” that inspires the young Thecla to break off her engagement with Thamyris and follow Paul as his assistant (\textit{Acts of Paul and Thecla 7}). Zamfir suggests that the PD very likely fight against an early ascetic interpretation of Paul. Such an ascetic tradition, she asserts, was incorporated later into the \textit{Acts of Paul and Thecla}.\footnote{Zamfir, \textit{Men and Women in the Household of God}, 178.} However, this, like the “Gnostic” theory, is problematic. Zamfir’s suggestion is built on the assumption that the incipient form of an ideology can be easily connected to a well-developed form.\footnote{Zamfir thinks the Pastorals were written by the end of the first century, or perhaps early in the second century (Men and Women in the Household of God, 2). J.K. Elliott, ed., \textit{The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on M.R. James} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 357, writes: “The majority of scholars date [The Acts of Paul] at the end of the second century.” Thus, we have a lengthy period of development. In contrast to Zamfir, Jeremy W. Barrier, \textit{The Acts of Paul and Thecla: A Critical Introduction and
Though his work is outside the field of Pauline studies, Daniel Streett’s critique of this interpretive maneuver is apropos. Streett argues that it is illegitimate to claim that the opponents in a NT letter were on a certain trajectory toward a later heresy. Such claims, he says, “fallaciously define the antecedent in terms of the consequent; they also mistakenly assume that ideas naturally evolve in a mechanistic fashion from one form to another.”

Some commentators try to connect the marriage prohibition and dietary regulations to a form of Judaism. Sean Charles Martin argues that the opponents were priests who imposed the dietary restrictions of Judaism and objected to exogamous marriages. “Intermarriage is forbidden,” Martin says, “for the same reason that table fellowship is restricted: a people set apart from the nations expresses its election through symbolic segregation.” While this is possible, Paul’s strong endorsement of marriage and motherhood elsewhere in the letter suggests that it is marriage in general that the opponents proscribe. Of the known Jewish groups, certain subsets of the larger Essene party appear to have been celibate. The Roman author, Pliny the Elder, described the tribe of the Essenes as “remarkable beyond all other tribes in the whole world, as it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire” (Nat. 5.73). Josephus speaks in a number of places about the Essene attitude toward marriage. He writes, for example: “They shun

Commentary, WUNT 2.270 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 33-47, examines the possible connections between the Acts of Paul and Thecla and the PD and concludes: “There is no polemic of the Pastorals against the APTh, which was written much later, and no sufficient evidence to directly link the APTh to earlier folklore or oral accounts that were the target of the Pastorals” (37, emphasis added). See also the discussion in Matthijs den Dulk, “I Permit No Woman to Teach Except for Thecla: The Curious Case of the Pastoral Epistles and the Acts of Paul Reconsidered,” NovT 54 (2012): 190–197.

Streett, They Went Out from Us, 128. Pietersen, The Polemic of the Pastorals, 101-106, runs into similar problems when he argues for a connection with Montanism. Montanus, he claims, taught the dissolution of marriages and made laws concerning fasts. But Pietersen himself acknowledges that there is no agreement concerning the date of Montanism. He suggests that the movement arose in the 160s C.E. and that acute confrontation began in the 170s C.E.

Scholars who point to connections with some branch of Judaism include Lightfoot, Biblical Essays, 411-418; Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 47; Jeremias, Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus, 30; Martin, Pauli Testamentum, 211-217; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 358; Gunther, St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background, 101-102, who connects 1 Tim 4:1-5 to 1 Tim 5:22-23, suggesting that the ascetics were water drinkers.

Martin, Pauli Testamentum, 225.

See the discussion of 1 Tim 2:9-15 in chapter three and 1 Tim 5:9-16 in chapter four.
pleasures as a vice and regard temperance and control of the passions as a special virtue. Marriage they disdain” (B.J. 2.120). But it is clear from the Qumran texts that not all Essenes objected to marriage: “And if they reside in the camps in accordance with the rule of the land, and take women and beget children, they shall walk in accordance with the law and according to the regulation” (CD 7.6-7). In my view, the most compelling argument against the Jewish theory in general is that we find not a single reference to circumcision in all of 1 and 2 Timothy (compare Titus 1:10). This is a significant silence.

Other interpreters underscore the parallels that can be found within the orbit of the Pauline ministry, and it is here that we make the most headway. Paul regularly addresses matters of sexual relations and food restrictions in his correspondence with the churches in his care (undisputed: Rom 14:13-23; 1 Cor 7:1-40; 8:1-13; 10:23-31; Gal 2:11-14; 1 Thess 4:1-8; disputed: Col 2:16-23). Towner has suggested that in both 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy these matters were related to some type of eschatological misconception. In 1 Corinthians, he argues, it appears that the focus in some of the Corinthians’ thinking moved from the future eschatological event of completion to the present pneumatic experiences: they viewed themselves as having already arrived (1 Cor 4:8). Anticipating the discussion of 2 Tim 2:18, it is evident that there was an eschatological misconception in Ephesus: some of the opponents in Ephesus were


151 Towner, “Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm,” 95-124. Towner builds on Lane, “1 Tim. IV 1-3,” 164-167; and especially Anthony C. Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” NTS 24 (1978): 510-526, and his “over-realized” reading of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy has been taken up by Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 24–26; Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 218–222, though this sort of reading of 1 Corinthians has been challenged by a number of scholars. See, for example, Richard B. Hays, First Corinthians, IBC (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 254-269; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 559-560; Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 178-179; N.T. Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 278-280.

152 Towner, “Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm,” 99–100.
teaching that the resurrection had already happened. Since the opponents came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3-4), they would have been exposed to Paul’s thought, so this likely refers to a confusion of the future, bodily resurrection with the present, mystical resurrection to new life in Christ (e.g., Rom 6:1-11; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:5; Col 2:11-14; 3:1).\footnote{153} It seems that the opponents \textit{spiritualized} the resurrection and claimed that it had been fully realized in the present, which meant they saw themselves living \textit{only} in the age to come, rather than in the \textit{overlap} of the present age and the age to come.

This perceived consummation of the present age could be the key to understanding the asceticism mentioned here in 1 Tim 4:3. Perhaps the opponents sought immediate application of Jesus’ teaching, recorded in Matt 22:30: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.” Even more likely, since the opponents seem to have come from within the Pauline community in Ephesus, is the notion that they misinterpreted Paul’s teaching similar to that contained in 1 Cor 7:29-31: “The appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none” (v. 29). Richard Hays summarizes Paul’s point: “He cannot be telling married Christians to renounce sex, for he has explicitly given the opposite advice in verses 1-7; rather, he means that they should live out their marriages with a watchful awareness \textit{that the present order of things is not ultimate}.”\footnote{154} It is not difficult to envisage such Pauline teaching becoming high-octane justification for the opponents’ prohibition of marriage, since they were most likely under the impression that they were citizens of the age to come. That Paul’s teaching on marriage would have circulated in Ephesus is highly probable. It is clear from 1 Cor 16:8 that 1 Corinthians was written while Paul was in Ephesus, and it is reasonable to conclude that the theology of 1 Corinthians reflects Paul’s preaching in Ephesus when he ministered in the city, for, as Paul Trebilco notes, “it would have been surprising if Paul had written in one way to Corinth, and then preached with a quite different emphasis the next day in Ephesus.”\footnote{155} Thus, the most likely interpretation at this stage of the investigation seems to be that, believing they had been projected into the age to come, the opponents sought to do away with marriage, since, according to Paul, marriage is fitting only for the old order.

\footnote{153}{See the full discussion of 2 Tim 2:18 in chapter five.}
\footnote{154}{Hays, \textit{First Corinthians}, 127, emphasis added.}
\footnote{155}{Trebilco, \textit{The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius}, 73.}
Can this eschatological misconception account for the opponents’ food restrictions as well? Lane suggests that, in Luke 24:42, “Jesus indicated by his own example that the food to be taken after the resurrection was fish or honeycomb.” But, again, since it appears the opponents defected from the Pauline community, it is more probable that they expanded some of Paul's teaching on food, such as the admonition in Rom 14:17, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking,” or perhaps some of the teaching contained in 1 Cor 8:1-13: “Food will not bring us close to God.’ We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do” (v. 8). Certainly Paul taught that food is spiritually insignificant.

Another possibility related to the eschatological misconception is that the opponents found support for their asceticism in the law. The immediate context could suggest that the opponents’ defended their extreme practices by appealing to the creation account. Paul appeals to the creation account in both 1 Tim 2:13-15 and 1 Tim 4:3b-5. It could be that he focuses on the early chapters of Genesis because the opponents were misinterpreting them. If the opponents did in fact think they were residents of the age to come, maybe they equated life in the age to come with life in Eden. Schlarb suggests the opponents wanted to return to a Pre-fall state, where there was no marriage and where meat was not eaten: “Erst nach dem Fall gehörte auch die geschlechtliche Verbindung, sprich Ehe, sowie die daraus folgende Kinderzeugung zu diesem Leben. Als weiteres Zeichen des Verlustes konnte auch der Fleischgenuss angesehen werden, denn in paradiesischer Ursprünglichkeit lebten Adam und Eva von Kräutern und Samen, waren also Vegetarier. Erst in der weiteren Folge des Falls wurde dann auch der Fleischgenuss gestattet.”

In my discussion of 1 Tim 1:3-7, I suggested that the opponents were engaged in speculative exegesis of the OT, imaginative retellings of parts of the Pentateuch. Abstinence from marriage could hardly be a teaching derived from a plain reading of the OT; the command, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” is repeated throughout Genesis (Gen 1:28; 9:1; 35:11). While it is possible that the opponents took liberties of omission and expansion with the Genesis text and supported their asceticism by appealing

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156 Lane, “1 Tim. IV 1-3,” 166.
157 This is one of the options discussed briefly by Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 535.
158 See the discussion of this passage in the following chapter.
159 Schlarb, *Die gesunde Lehre*, 132.
to some form of Pre-fall way of life, we must question whether the evidence is sufficient to conclude that this theory is *probable*. The conclusion rests heavily on the assumption that Paul appeals to the creation account in 1 Tim 4:3b-5 because the opponents used the *creation account* in the development of their asceticism. But it could be argued that Paul alludes to Gen 1-2 in vv. 3b-5 simply because he considers the creation account to be the *best* counter argument to the opponents’ food restrictions.\(^{161}\) Additionally, the fact that Paul alludes to other OT elements and characters (e.g., the Decalogue, Korah, Jannes and Jambres)\(^ {162}\) in the explicit and implicit units of 1 and 2 Timothy reduces the likelihood that the opponents focused on Gen 1-2. At this stage, we can only say that the law (1 Tim 1:7) had an important place in the opponents’ teaching activities. We cannot say it is probable that Gen 1-2 played a key role in the development of their asceticism.

2. Paul Combats with a Proper Theology of Creation (vv. 3b-5)

Beginning in the second part of v. 3, and continuing to the end of the unit, Paul responds to the opponents’ asceticism with an interpretation of Gen 1-2. The neuter plural ἄρχα has as its antecedent the neuter plural βρωμάτων. Having already expressed that Christians may marry, establish a household, and raise children (1 Tim 2:8-15; 3:1-12), Paul focuses here on the food regulations.\(^ {163}\) The center of Paul’s rebuttal is the belief that God’s creation is good. It is important to note that Paul does not have to prove “that the world was created by God rather than by some demiurge, but simply that all of God’s creation is good.”\(^ {164}\) We find no evidence in 4:3b-5 to suggest that the opponents’ view of creation was based on a belief in devolution in the godhead; thus, there is nothing especially “Gnostic” about their position on food.

Paul first asserts that God is the Creator of the food the opponents reject (ὁ θεὸς ἐκτισεν, v. 3b). The verb κτίζω is used in the NT only of the creative activity of God (Matt 19:4; Mark 13:19; Rom 1:25; 1 Cor 11:9; Eph 2:10, 15; 3:9; 4:24; Col 1:16; 3:10; 1 Tim 4:3; Rev 4:11; 10:6). Probably alluding to Gen 1:29 LXX (ὑμῖν ἔσται εἰς βρῶσιν), Paul indicates that God graciously created food for human nourishment. For this reason, food is to be received gladly and with gratitude (εἰς μετάληψιν μετὰ εὐχαριστίας, v. 3b; μετὰ

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\(^{161}\) See the discussion in Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus*, 40-44.

\(^{162}\) See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:8-11 in chapter three and 2 Tim 2:14-26; 3:1-9 in chapter five.

\(^{163}\) With Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 542. Contra Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 240, who takes the relative pronoun as including both marriage and food.

εὐχαριστίας λαμβάνωμεν, v. 4b). Paul adds τοῖς πιστοῖς not to say that only believers may eat, but to emphasize that genuine believers ought to acknowledge God’s gracious provision by giving thanks. Paul further describes believers as “those who have come to know the truth” (ἐπεγνώκοσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν). ἀλήθεια occurs fourteen times in the PD. The term refers to the apostolic gospel, or perhaps at times more generally to the body of Christian doctrine with the gospel at its core (e.g., 1 Tim 2:4; 7; 3:15; 6:5; 2 Tim 2:15; 4:4; Titus 1:14). To say that someone comes to the “knowledge of the truth” is, for Paul, one of the many ways of indicating authentic conversion (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1). Expressly in contrast to the unfounded orders of the opponents, believers can and should partake of the sustenance God has provided for his creatures, because “every creation of God is good” (πᾶν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλὸν). This is almost certainly an allusion to the summary statement of Gen 1:31 LXX (καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα, δόσα ἐποίησεν, καὶ ἰδοὺ καλὰ λίαν). God’s creation pronouncement functions as Paul’s theological basis for allowing freedom in the use of foods. Since God’s creation is good, no food is to be rejected (σὐδὲν ἀπόβλητον).

In v. 5, a further reason (γὰρ) for the acceptance of food is given: “it is sanctified.” The subject of the verb ἁγιάζεται is the aforementioned σῦδεν, here meaning “no food.” The verb ἁγιάζω is used only twice in the PD (1 Tim 4:5; 2 Tim 2:21). The idea of food being set apart as suitable or holy may indicate that the opponents banned certain foods because they considered them to be tainted or profane. However, as I have tried to show above, it is not clear that the opponents were insisting on Jewish regulations about food. In response to the opponents’ rejection of certain foods, Paul affirms that


166 See the discussion of 1 Tim 4:10 in chapter four.

167 With Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 297.


169 BDAG, s.v. “ἁγιάζω.” See also Paul Trebilco, “The Goodness and Holiness of the Earth and the Whole Creation (1 Timothy 4.1-5),” in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 204–220, who draws attention to the fact that this is quite a strong statement, since only in two NT passages (Matt 23:17, 19; 1 Tim 4:5) is anything other than a person said to be sanctified (see especially 210-211).

sustenance is sanctified “by the word of God and prayer” (διὰ λόγου θεοῦ καὶ ἐντευξίας).

Based on the previous allusions to the OT, λόγου θεοῦ should be understood primarily as a reference to God’s creative and approving word in Genesis. 171 In the two parallel statements of the argument—“God created food” (v. 3b) and “every creation of God is good” (v. 4)—Genesis is clearly in view, which hints that Paul once again has the creation account in mind. When God saw everything that he had made and pronounced it “very good” (Gen 1:31), all foods were sanctified and declared suitable. The apostolic gospel reasserts what was true at the beginning, and those who have come to know the truth realize that “nothing is unclean in itself” (Rom 14:14). Here in 1 Tim 4:5, Paul clearly denies a dualism that sees the spiritual or heavenly as holy and the material or earthly as corrupt. 172

The rare word ἐντευξία (“intercession”) is one of many terms used of communication with God, as indicated by its placement alongside the much more common δέησις, προσευχή, and εὐχαριστία in 1 Tim 2:1. Prayer does not take the place of God’s creation pronouncement, or add anything mystical to it. Paul’s point is that prayer is the believer’s way of acknowledging the creation pronouncement. It is not that prayer in itself consecrates food, but as Fee proposes: “The prayer of thanksgiving has inherent in it the recognition of God’s prior creative action.” 173 In sum, believers are to respond to God’s gracious provision and his creation pronouncement with a posture of thanksgiving. This is the apostolic interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis, which Paul provides as a corrective to the opponents’ food restrictions.

C. Summary of the Pericope

In 1 Tim 4:1-5, Paul offers an eschatological reading of the present situation in Ephesus. This section contains one of the strongest accusations in the letters: Paul states that the opponents have turned from the objective content of the Christian faith to Satanic teaching (v. 1). Paul does not suggest that his opponents simply hold a different opinion that can be overlooked. He is persuaded that the opponents are evil when measured by the standard of the apostolic gospel. This explains why Timothy is told to engage in warfare against them (1 Tim 1:18-20). By combining the terms ὑπόκρισις and ψευδολόγος (v. 2a),

173 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 100.
Paul accentuates the important point that the opponents are not who they say they are. This is likely a reference to the same sort of trickery that surfaced in 1 Tim 1:3-7. Though Paul now thinks of the opponents as unbelievers (1 Tim 1:5-6), they still claim their spot within the Christian community (1 Tim 1:3), which makes them Christian pretenders (1 Tim 4:2a). Their rejection of the gospel means that their consciences have been rendered ineffective; thus, it is impossible for them to live godly lives (v. 2b). Some of their inappropriate practices are mentioned in v. 3a: they enforced abstinence from marriage and select foods. It seems most likely that an eschatological misconception—one where the opponents saw themselves living only in the age to come—led to their asceticism, though we will need to consider this hypothesis further when we examine 2 Tim 2:14-26. Paul rebuts the food regulations of the opponents with a reading of Gen 1-2, exhorting genuine believers to acknowledge God’s gracious provision and the holiness of his creation by giving thanks. The idea of food being set apart as holy could mean that the opponents banned certain foods because they considered them to be tainted or profane. It is not clear from 1 Tim 4:1-5, however, that the opponents were insisting on Jewish dietary regulations. I have also noted that there is no indication in this unit that the opponents held an especially “Gnostic” position on food.

IV. Rejection of Healthy Words and Corruption of Character (1 Tim 6:2b-5)

Regardless of versification, the second-person singular imperatives (διδάσκει and παρακάλει) signal the start of a new section. The entire closing section of the letter (1 Tim 6:2b-21a) bears a close resemblance to the opening section (1 Tim 1:3-20). The opponents are the topic of Paul’s first and his last words. In this larger concluding portion, the deviant ones are most clearly in view in vv. 2b-5 and vv. 20-21. Many themes from the opening chapter are emphasized again in 6:2b-5, but new elements emerge as well. One such element is the accusation that the false teachers are driven by greed, though we will need to consider whether or not there is good reason to conclude that this charge has a basis in fact.

A. The Opponents Have Rejected the Christ-Centered Teaching (vv. 2b-3)

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The transitional ταύτα formula in 1 Tim 6:2b is repeated from 1 Tim 4:11 (Παράγγελλε ταύτα καὶ δίδασκε). In 1 Timothy, Paul consistently uses the plural demonstrative pronoun to refer to instruction issued previously in the letter (3:14; 4:6, 11, 15; 5:7, 21; 6:2, 8, 11). The pronoun here refers at least to the teaching contained in 1 Tim 5:1-6:2a, although it could refer back to the comprehensive teaching of the letter. The fact that Paul uses the formula here to transition to his final exhortation makes the latter option more likely. Timothy is to be mindful of all that his mentor has said, and the delegate is to continue the work of faithful proclamation (διδάσκε, “to teach;” παρακαλέω, “to urge”), especially since there are some in Ephesus who proclaim an alternative gospel (ἐτεροδιδασκαλέω).

First Timothy 6:3 is the protasis (“if”) of a first-class conditional sentence; vv. 4-5 are the apodosis (“then”). Since the marker of condition (ei) is paired with indicative verbs, the “if” clause is assumed true for the sake of the argument. Thus, v. 3 is not hypothetical; rather, it is a description of the actual situation in Ephesus. The verse is largely reiterative. As in 1 Tim 1:3, no names are mentioned (τίς), and the opponents are referred to as those who “teach deviant doctrine” (ἐτεροδιδασκαλέω). As I argued in the exegesis of 1 Tim 1:3-7, the verb ἐτεροδιδασκαλέω presupposes accepted or standard doctrine. In 1 Tim 1:11, Paul clearly indicates that the apostolic gospel is the presupposed standard (κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον). What is new in 1 Tim 6:3 is that now the standard doctrine is referred to as “the healthy words of our Lord Jesus Christ” (ὑγιείας λόγων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), and it is said that the opponents “do not apply themselves” (μὴ προσέρχεται) to these words. Several interpretive matters need to be sorted out here.


Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 393.

Fee, I and 2 Timothy, Titus, 140; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 117.


With Fee, I and 2 Timothy, Titus, 140–141; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 638; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 336–337; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 393.

Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 337, points out that this is the only place in the NT where μὴ is used with an indicative verb, which is a classical pattern. See BDF §428.1.
First, what exactly is the meaning of προσέρχομαι? Though the verb is common, occurring over sixty times in the Gospels, ten times in Acts, and eight times in the Catholic Epistles, this is the only occurrence of the verb in the Pauline letters. The term most often refers to physical movement towards something, though it can also refer to intellectual movement (e.g., Plutarch, Cat. Min. 12.2; Epictetus, Disc. 4.11.24; Did. 4.14), and this is probably the way it should be understood in this context. Such a meaning meshes well with the upcoming remark about people with depraved minds (v. 5). Here, the crux of the matter is that the opponents are not the least bit interested in the gospel; their thoughts have wandered elsewhere. They are intrigued instead by “stories and accounts of ancestries” (προσέχειν μύθοις καὶ γενεαλογίαις, 1 Tim 1:4).

Second, what is the thrust of the term ὑγιαῖνο? A number of interpreters have pointed to Paul’s frequent use of language of health and disease in his discussion of the opponents in the PD. ὑγιαῖνο (“to be healthy”) is one of the terms in Paul’s medical bag. The verb was first used of physical well-being (e.g., Plato, Gorg. 495E; Aristotle, Metaph. 1032B), but it acquired a figurative sense among the secular philosophers. Paul uses the term throughout the PD, most often as an adjectival participle, modifying either διδασκαλία (1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1) or λόγος (1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13). The body of apostolic teaching is invested with a quality generally reserved for the human body—healthiness. The point of the personification is at least twofold: 1) the apostolic doctrine is free from all pathogenic content, and 2) the opponents’ doctrine is contaminated. A third possible facet of the figure is that the effect of the accepted apostolic teaching is healthy conduct. In his thorough study of the medical imagery, Abraham Malherbe warns: “It is not said that sound teaching makes its recipient

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182 The verb προσέρχεται is more difficult in this context than the alternative προσέχεται (R* lat), which can be explained as either intentional assimilation to 1 Tim 1:4 (προσέχω) or as accidental omission of the ρ. Thus, the reading of NA28 is most likely the original. With Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 575. Contra Elliott, The Greek Text of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, 90, who accepts the variant on the basis of the occurrence in 1:4.
183 Schneider, TDNT, s.v. “προσέρχομαι.”
185 BDAG, s.v. “ὑγιαῖνο.”
sound." But since Paul has continually emphasized the connection between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, there is no good reason to try to sever the link between content and conduct here. The prepositional phrase, κατ’ εὐσέβειαν (discussed below), and the fact that Paul moves directly from the opponents’ rejection of the apostolic teaching to a condemnation of the opponents’ behavior (vv. 4-5) is evidence that we should understand “healthy” in the fullest sense here.

Third, how are we to understand the somewhat ambiguous modifying phrase “of our Lord Jesus Christ” (τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)? This could be a subjective genitive—“healthy words spoken by Christ”—and many commentators have taken it this way, some even suggesting the reference here is to a written Gospel (usually Luke). Spicq notices the similarity between Acts 20:35 and 1 Tim 5:18 and proposes: “Or ce texte, corroborant notre verset, permet de considérer comme hautement probable, l’existence d’un evangile écrit faisant autorité à Éphèse, celui de Luc ou de l’un de ses devanciers (Lc. I,1), qui serait comme le trésor de cette Église métropolitaine.”

But Paul has just reiterated, in fairly broad terms, that the opponents think away from the apostolic gospel and that they teach an anti-gospel, so searching for a very narrow referent (in Luke) here is probably not the best option. A few commentators argue that the intention of the genitive construction is to attribute the origin and authority of the healthy teaching to Christ. Still another option is to classify the phrase as an objective genitive—“healthy

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187 Malherbe, “Medical Imagery in the Pastoral Epistles,” 123. Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 46, on the other hand, suggests that the concern of the imagery is “not with the content of doctrine; rather, it is with behavior” (emphasis original).

188 Some of Malherbe's other conclusions (see Paul and the Popular Philosophers, 144–145) are problematic as well. For example, he suggests that the medical imagery of the PD is diagnostic, but never therapeutic: “It describes the diseased condition of the heretics, but is never utilized to describe a therapy for those sick souls. It is never explicitly said that the morally or religiously ill person will actually be cured by sound or healthy words.” He further contends: “There seems to be no prospect of amelioration in [the opponents’] condition.” This is an over-interpretation of the medical imagery. The result is a conclusion that is inconsistent with oppositional passages where the medical imagery is not as dominant, such as 1 Tim 1:18-20. As we have already seen, the goal of discipline in 1:18-20 is amelioration.

189 Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 1:557. See also Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 68; Jeremias, Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus, 44; Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 331; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 297-298.

190 For example, Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 298, suggests Luke 22:25-27, along with a number of other passages.

191 Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge, 273; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 141; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 394.
words about Christ”—thus understanding the construction as a more general reference to the Christian faith. I conclude, with Marshall, that it is superfluous hairsplitting to distinguish between the final two options above. Christ is the source and the center of the apostolic doctrine, and the grave error of the opponents is their abandonment of this Christ-centered teaching.

Finally in v. 3, Paul further describes the apostolic doctrine as the teaching that “accords with godliness” (τῇ κατ’ εὐσέβειαν διδασκαλίᾳ). The preposition κατά probably should be understood here as a marker of intention or goal, as in Titus 1:1 (ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθειας τῆς κατ’ εὐσέβειαν). The healthy teaching will bring εὐσέβεια, a key word in the PD, and especially in 1 Timothy (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1). The term is generally translated as either “godliness” or “piety,” but a variety of more precise meanings have been suggested. Spicq argues that εὐσέβεια refers to an attitude of reverence toward God. Dibelius and Conzelmann suggest the term denotes behavior that is acceptable to both God and men, though this is of course to be understood in the light of their broader characterization of the author’s ethical teaching as “good Christian citizenship” (christliche Bürgerlichkeit). H. von Lips looks to the popular philosophers and describes εὐσέβεια as conduct that accords with the will of the gods; it necessarily involves knowledge of what pleases the divine. W. Foerster proposes εὐσέβεια is the manner of life that is born out of faith.

194 BDAG, s.v. “κατά.”
197 Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 39. Martin Dibelius first used the phrase christliche Bürgerlichkeit in his 1931 commentary to explain the ethical instruction in the PD. The basic assumption is that the hope of the parousia diminished over time and the church was forced to settle in and strive for peaceful coexistence with the orders of the world. For what is still one of the most substantial critiques of this interpretation, see Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction.
In the NT, εὐσεβεία occurs fifteen times, and is confined to Acts, the PD, and 2 Peter. The concept was very much at home in the Greco-Roman world. In Greek culture it certainly carried the connotation of reverence, which could be directed to a wide range of objects, including relatives (living and deceased), the law, judges, the emperor, and the gods. The term was connected to the Artemis cult at Ephesus (NeatDocs 2.82.19; 4.80-81). The Roman equivalent, pietas, is used in similar ways (e.g., Cicero, Nat. d. 1.116). But especially illuminating is the use of the term εὐσεβεία in Hellenistic Judaism. The term is common in the LXX, appearing roughly sixty times, with only four of these occurrences in the canonical books, and forty-seven occurrences concentrated in 4 Maccabees. Where the Greek word occurs with a Hebrew equivalent, it can be translated “fear of the LORD” (יהוה יְהוָה, Isa 33:6). Carrying connotations of knowledge, love, and reverence, and connected to ideas such as loyalty to the covenant, “fear of the LORD” is the Hebrew expression that comes closest to what modern languages might refer to as “religion,” a term lacking in both Hebrew and Greek. Hellenistic Judaism reflects the attempt to translate OT (Hebrew) concepts into the Greek language, and what was needed was a term that encapsulated the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the OT expression “fear of the LORD.” εὐσεβεία met this need; it allowed a Jew in a Greek milieu to explain himself to his contemporaries.

Paul’s usage of εὐσεβεία in the PD is consistent with the usage of the term in the Hellenistic Jewish literature. The word-group is a predominant feature of the theological-ethical description of authentic Christianity. In the discussion of 1 Tim 1:5, I suggested that, in the PD, the good conscience translates the apostolic gospel into ἄγαπη-living. This ongoing translation is most likely what Paul has in mind when he speaks of

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201 For a discussion of the Artemis cult, see Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 19–30.
202 Quinn, The Letter to Titus, 282–291, argues that modern languages describe the interplay of knowledge of the divine and conduct pleasing to the divine with the single term, “religion.”
203 Ibid., 287–291.
204 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 141.
205 See, for example, Sumney, “God Our Savior,” 105-123; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 174; Tamez, Struggles for Power in Early Christianity, 23.
“godliness.” Here in 1 Tim 6:3, Paul indicates that since the opponents have rejected the Christ-centered teaching, true “godliness” is for them impossible.206

B. The Opponents Are Warped and Wrongly Motivated (vv. 4-5)

The apodosis of the “if… then” statement is found in vv. 4-5. The opponents’ doctrine does not “accord with godliness” (κατ᾿ εὐσέβειαν, v. 3); rather, it corrupts the character and produces sinful conduct. In v. 4a, Paul uses a perfect indicative verb and two participial phrases to describe the condition of the deviant ones. The verb τυφόω occurs only three times in the NT (1 Tim 3:6; 6:4; 2 Tim 3:4). In 1 Tim 3:6, Paul warns that an elder must not be a “recent convert, or he might become puffed up” (μὴ νεόφυτων, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθείς). In 2 Tim 3:4, the term appears in a long list of vices. Clearly having negative connotations, τυφόω could mean “to be conceited,”207 “to be deluded/stupid,”208 or “to be demented.”209 Though the verb often occurs with words describing the cognitive element in man (e.g., Lucian, Nigr. 1) and at times appears to refer to mental illness (e.g., Demosthenes, Oration 9.20), this sense does not settle well in 1 Tim 3:6. Why would a new convert appointed to a position of leadership in the Christian community become “demented”? The verb was frequently used among teachers in antiquity to point out the stupidity of their rivals (Dio Chrysostom, Oration 6.21; Josephus, Ag. Ap. 1.15), but this meaning does not seem to fit the discussion of elder qualifications in 1 Tim 3 either. It is more likely that in 1 and 2 Timothy Paul uses the term to denote conceit; the sense is “to be puffed up, full of smoke of vanity, decked out in excessive pretension.”210

Paul next claims that the opponents “know nothing.” The adverbial participle ἐπιστάμενος is probably concessive, making 1 Tim 6:4 a parallel of 1 Tim 1:7. In 1 Tim 1:7, Paul declared that the opponents want a platform (θέλοντες εἶναι νομοδιδάσκαλοι)

206 Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 152, suggests that εὐσέβεια was probably plucked from the jargon of the opponents: “The false teachers, by propounding their esoteric gnosis with its fundamental distortion of soteriology, were succeeding in driving a wedge between faith and praxis with pernicious results. Through what was probably their own use of the term eusebeia, they proposed an alternative, gnosis-oriented, ‘Christian’ existence…” This would be a stronger hypothesis if εὐσέβεια occurred only in the PD, but the occurrence of the term in Acts and 2 Peter makes the theory less likely. We probably should not, however, rule out the possibility altogether.

207 See the discussion in Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 638-639.

208 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 292.


210 TLNT, s.v. “τυφόομαι.”
“even though they are ignorant” (μη νοοῦντες). Here in 1 Tim 6:4, the opponents are pompous (πετεύονται) “even though they know nothing” (μηδὲν ἐπιστάμενος). This is the only occurrence of the verb ἐπιστάμαι in the Pauline literature, but the term is common in Acts (10:28; 15:7; 18:25; 19:15, 25; 20:18; 22:19; 24:10; 26:26). It refers either to the mental grasp of something (Acts 19:25) or to personal acquaintance with someone (e.g., Acts 19:15).

To this description Paul adds a second participial phrase: the opponents “have an unhealthy craving concerning debates and word-battles” (νοσῶν περὶ ζητήσεις καὶ λογομαχίας). The verb νοσέω is a NT hapax. The term can mean, first of all, “to be physically sick” (Herodotus, Persian War 1.105), but it is often used figuratively, referring to mental or spiritual ailment (Wis 17:8, ψυχῆς νοσοῦσης; Xenophon, Mem. 3.5.18; Philo, Leg. 3.211; Josephus, Ant. 16.244; 18.25). The specific force here could be that the opponents have an unhealthy craving for controversy (as in Plutarch, Mor. 546F) or that the opponents are sick from the controversies in which they have participated. Both translations are acceptable. The chief concern is that their thoughts have wandered away from the healthy words (v. 3), and, as a result, the opponents have engaged in word-wars. The noun ζήτησις is not necessarily a negative term; it can refer to investigation (Acts 25:20), discussion (John 3:25), or debate (Acts 15:2). Here Paul pairs it with λογομαχία, yet another NT hapax. The term appears to be a compound of the familiar λόγος and the less common μάχη (“fight,” 2 Cor 7:5; 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9) that simply continues the meaning of its etymology. Lock translates, “fights in which words are the weapons.” Since λογομαχία has a negative connotation, we should understand ζήτησις as a reference to controversy, a debate that is heated and unhelpful. This corresponds with Paul’s two other uses of ζήτησις in the PD; both times he claims the controversies are “foolish” (μωρᾶς καὶ ἀπαιδεύτους ζητήσεις, 2 Tim 2:23; μωρᾶς δὲ

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211 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 141; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 640.
212 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 292.
213 BDAG, s.v. “ζήτησις.”
214 Though λογομαχία appears as a variant reading in Titus 3:9 and the verbal form λογομαχέω appears in 2 Tim 2:14.
215 With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 141; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 338.
216 Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 68.
217 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 395, defines controversies as “discussions that have gone beyond the stage of a useful exchange of ideas.”
ζητήσεις, Titus 3:9). Neil McEleney concludes: “One has the impression that the author speaks of self-appointed ‘know-it-alls,’ sophists who love to argue.”

The relative clause (ἐξ ὧν) lists five vices that develop (γίνομαι) from the opponents’ divisiveness. Virtue and vice lists appear in all the Pauline letters except 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. These lists are by no means unique to the Pauline corpus; catalogs of this sort are abundant in antiquity (e.g., Wis 14:25-26; Did. 3; Plutarch, Mor. 473B; Epictetus, Disc. 3.22.61). Paul may at times include conventional lists in his letters, designed to depict the general depravity of unbelievers and to encourage believers to avoid such practices. But since the vices in this list are consistent with the comments about the opponents found elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 1:18-20; 4:1-2), the catalog in vv. 4-5a probably should be understood as a description of the false teachers. Marshall insists that the vice list is a reflection of the reality in Ephesus: “The list contains five items which can all be regarded as aspects of strife, bitterness and mutual suspicion which break down fellowship. The piling up of language indicates that the internal bickering in the congregation is an especial problem.”

The first noun, φθόνος (“envy”), is used four other times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: Rom 1:29; Gal 5:21; Phil 1:15; disputed: Titus 3:3). In Phil 1:15 the term is paired with ἔρις (“rivalry”), as it is here in 1 Tim 6:4. The combination indicates the opponents’ desire to tear down rival teachers. This leads to βλασφημία (“blasphemy”), which in this context should be understood as malicious talk or slander of the rivals, those who embrace the apostolic gospel (compare 1 Tim 1:20). Next, the opponents are affiliated with “conjecture” (ὑπόνοια), which is qualified as “evil” (πονηρός). The noun ὑπόνοια occurs only here in the NT, though the cognate verb ὑπονοέω appears in Acts

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219 The specific form is that of a Filiationsreihe; the vices are related to their origin. See Rollof, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 329.
221 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 641. Contra Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 558, who claims: “The polemic of 1 Tim 6:4-5 is so extensively paralleled in the polemic of the philosophers against the sophists that it is impossible to infer from the accusations any point of the teaching or the conduct of the opponents.”
222 McEleney, “The Vice-Lists of the Pastoral Epistles,” 211.
(13:25; 25:18; 27:27), meaning “to form an opinion” or “to suspect.” Additionally, the phrase “evil conjecture” is found in Sir 3:24 (πολλοὺς γὰρ ἐπλάνησεν ἡ υπόληψις αὐτῶν, καὶ ύπόνοια πονηρὰ ἐλύσθησεν διανοίας αὐτῶν). Again, the target is Timothy and all those who have not turned from the healthy teaching; the opponents are suspicious of faithfulness. The final term in the list of sins is the rather mysterious διαπαρατριβή. The noun is a true hapax legomenon, occurring nowhere else in the ancient literature. The best solution is to understand it as a heightened form of παρατριβή, which means “irritation” or “friction” (Polybius, Histories 2.36.5; 21.16.5; 22.10.4; 23.3.4; 30.27.2). Compounding a preposition with another word has various effects, one of which is intensification of meaning. If this is the case here, then the hapax may be translated in a number of ways: “constant friction,” “endless squabbles,” or “persistent collisions.” This meaning fits perfectly in the context: διαπαρατριβή is the peak of the disputatious pile.

Paul follows the vice list with three participial phrases that further describe the divisive ones. The first two phrases appear to be closely related. First, they are “men depraved in mind” (διεφθαρµένων ἀνθρώπων τὸν νοῦν). Generally speaking, in Pauline anthropology, the νοῦς is the faculty of intellectual perception. Every occurrence of the term in the PD is in reference to the corrupted thinking of opponents (1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:8; Titus 1:15). The verb διαφθείρω occurs only once more in the Pauline literature. In 2 Cor 4:16 it refers to the wasting away of the physical body. Luke uses the verb to refer to a moth eating away at a garment (Luke 12:33). Modifying “mind,” the term must be understood in a figurative sense. Since here and in 2 Tim 3:8 the minds of the false teachers are said to be in some way distorted (καταφθείρω, 2 Tim 3:8), and since in both places this distortion is linked closely with a negative response to the objective content of the Christian faith (ἀλήθεια), διαφθείρω probably indicates a process of cognitive decay that began with the opponents’ decision to reject the gospel. Paul goes on to say that the opponents have no access to the apostolic teaching: they are “deprived of the truth”

223 BDAG, s.v. “ὑπονοεῖω.”
225 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 396.
226 Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 115.
227 Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 68.
228 See the discussion in Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle, 73–74; Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 158–159.
The verb ἀποστερέω means “to be defrauded” or “to be deprived.” The two perfect participles are used to indicate that these conditions—mental corruption and spiritual deprivation—exist now because of the past action of turning away from the gospel.

Finally, the opponents “suppose godliness to be a means of gain” (νομιζόντων πορισιμον εἶναι τὴν εὐσέβειαν). The verb νομίζω is fairly common in the NT, though it occurs only two other times in the Pauline writings (1 Cor 7:26, 36). The term refers to the formation of an idea. εὐσέβεια (“godliness”) occurs for the second time in this pericope. In v. 3, Paul declared that true godliness is for the opponents inconceivable. Now, in v. 5, the opponents have conjured their own notion of godliness: it is a “means of gain” (πορισιμός). πορισιμός occurs only here (repeated in 1 Tim 6:6) in the NT. It is found twice in the LXX (Wis 13:19, paired with ἐργασία; 14:2), and appears in a number of other ancient writings (e.g., Polybius, Roman History, 3.112.2; Plutarch, Mor. 524D). In 1 Tim 6:5, the word refers to financial gain. A commonplace charge against opponents in the ancient world was that they were only interested in teaching to turn a profit. Since this accusation was so common in antiquity, some scholars suggest that it cannot be taken seriously here. Karris calls it “a stock criticism of the sophist,” and Dibelius and Conzelmann argue, “The opponents are here criticized with expressions coined in part by popular philosophy, but such terms do not yield any factual information about them.”

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229 BDAG, s.v. “ἀποστερέω."
230 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 397, explains: “Rejection of the apostolic faith has rendered these opponents incapable of comprehending (theology) and processing (ethics) God’s truth.”
231 The shorter reading, εὐσέβειαν (A D* F G etc.), is to be preferred; if a longer reading were present originally, no good reason can be assigned for its omission. With Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 575–576.
233 For the charge itself, see Lucian, Fug. 14; for the refusal of financial aid to prevent the charge, see Lucian, Nigr. 25-26; Demon. 8, 63; Dio Chrysostom, Oration 31.5; 32.11.
234 Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 552.
235 Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 83. Though, oddly enough, the authors go on to suggest, based on Titus 1:11, that the false teachers had gained “a following and an income.” This seems to me to be a very inconsistent interpretation of the polemic.
Sumney, also, is too tentative, claiming, “6.3-5 yields no new evidence about the opponents except the possibility that they accept pay from their converts.”

However, there are at least three internal indications that Paul’s charge is substantial. First, 1 Tim 6:3-21 is carefully structured, with the accusation of greed (vv. 3-10) providing the motivation for Paul’s words to the wealthy in the community (vv. 17-19). Second, Paul has already expressed concern about the proper view of money among the leadership: an elder must not be a “lover of money” (ἀφιλάργυρος, 1 Tim 3:3) and a deacon must not be “greedy” or “fond of dishonest gain” (αἰσχροκερδής, 1 Tim 3:8). The faithful leaders of the Christian community are called to be different from the opponents in a number of ways, one of which is their perception of money and possessions. Third, the recurrent reference to financial matters suggests that the allure of wealth was a real issue in the community (1 Tim 2:9; 3:3,8; 5:16, 17-18; 6:5, 6-10, 17-19). Trebilco concludes, “The Pastor may have taken over the charge of greed from the polemical schema, but it is an important point for him and he has shaped the section around the charge.”

Having established that Paul’s accusation is substantial, we need now to determine the precise force of the statement. Based on the earlier evidence of the letter, we may say that Paul probably means the opponents were passing themselves off as “godly” in order to dupe others into paying for their teaching. As we saw with the

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236 Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 266, emphasis added.
237 These points are developed by Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 226, 404-422.
238 Ibid, 226, emphasis added. Similarly, David C. Verner, The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles, SBLDS 71 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1983), 174; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 643; Vasile Mihoc, “The Final Admonition to Timothy (1 Tim 6,3-21),” in 1 Timothy Reconsidered, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peeters, 2008), 143. Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 109, says that, though it is difficult to assess the accuracy of this charge, it may in fact have substance. Margaret Y. MacDonald, The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writing, SNTSMS 60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 198, writes: “The fact that the polemic against false teachers in the Pastorals draws on many traditional elements does not mean that the exhortations have no connections to real situations. The author of the Pastorals, grounded in the Greco-Roman world, may well have understood the false teachers as exhibiting qualities that were traditionally condemned by the society at large.”
239 Reggie M. Kidd, Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: A “Bourgeois” Form of Early Christianity?, SBLDS 122 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 98, suggests that the opponents were wealthy church members and that others saw in their
combination of ὑπόκρισις and ψευδολόγος in 1 Tim 4:2, the opponents are not who they say they are. They are Christian pretenders and, now, godly posers (1 Tim 1:5-6; 4:2; 6:5), and teaching (1 Tim 1:7; 6:3) is for them a profit-making enterprise.²⁴⁰ “This role-playing gets them an actor’s salary and for them religion is a livelihood, not a life.”²⁴¹

C. Summary of the Pericope

First Timothy 6:2b-5 and 1 Tim 1:3-7 form an inclusio. In 1 Tim 6:3, Paul recapitulates facts first revealed in 1 Tim 1:3. The opponents are again accused of teaching deviant doctrine (ἐτεροδιδασκαλέω), though now Paul adds more detail to the description. He insists that these deviant teachers are not remotely interested in the apostolic gospel. They are fascinated, we may presume, by “stories and accounts of ancestries” (1 Tim 1:4), and have completely disregarded the Christ-centered teaching. Thus, true “godliness” (εὐσέβεια) is for them unattainable. The opponents’ doctrine corrupts the character and produces sinful conduct. Parallel to 1 Tim 1:7, Paul describes the opponents as arrogant and ignorant (v. 4). Moreover, since their minds have wandered away from the healthy words (v. 3), they have engaged in word-wars and divisive behavior (v. 4). Their rejection of the apostolic gospel means that they are not only cognitively corrupt, but are also spiritually bankrupt (v. 5). Nevertheless, in the same way that 1 Tim 4:2 gives us the impression that the opponents are Christian pretenders, 1 Tim 6:5 indicates that they are godly posers (εὐσέβεια), who promulgate their deviant doctrine for the purpose of turning a drachma (πορισμός).

material prosperity the proof of their piety and thus their authority to teach/lead. His theory (see 93-100) requires a strong link between wealth and leadership in the Christian community in Ephesus, which is problematic for a number of reasons. First, the desire for wealth was used to discount potential leaders (1 Tim 3:3, 8). Second, the existing elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of “double honor” (διπλής τιμής, 1 Tim 5:17). That financial remuneration is in view here is evidenced by the following scriptural quotes (v. 18). This suggests that these elders were not wealthy, since the rich would have seen their leadership roles as benefactions. Third, the rich Christians addressed in 1 Tim 6:17-19 are not encouraged to seek positions of leadership. The conclusion that church leaders in the PD were necessarily wealthy appears to be misguided. See the further discussion in Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 404-422.

²⁴⁰ This is the translation offered by Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 118: “they consider piety to be a profit-making enterprise.”

²⁴¹ Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 495.
V. Entrustment of the Gospel (1 Tim 6:20-21a)

The first letter to Timothy ends as it began—with a stern warning about the false teaching endangering the community in Ephesus.242 This short concluding section recapitulates the central theme of the letter: the delegate must preserve the apostolic gospel in the face of competing chatter that goes by the name γνῶσις.243

A. Timothy Must Safeguard the Apostolic Gospel (v. 20a)

As in 1 Tim 6:11, the marker of direct address is used (Ὡ), and for the second time in the letter Paul calls his delegate by name (1 Tim 1:18). The formula concentrates attention on the first addressee of the letter and puts the delegate on alert for the final appeal. The first part of the appeal is positive; Paul commands Timothy: “Guard that which has been entrusted to you” (τὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον). The verb φυλάσσω (“to guard” or “to protect”)244 occurs often in the NT, and five times in 1 and 2 Timothy (1 Tim 5:21; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12, 14; 4:15). The noun παραθήκη is found only in the PD (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12, 14). The term generally refers to some sort of valuable property that is entrusted to another. The concept of guarding and transmitting the παραθήκη or παρακαταθήκη, the form found in Attic prose, was a common one in the ancient world; money, harvests, and even people could be placed in the care of another.245 Andrew Lau suggests that in whatever context the concept is found (Greek, Roman, or Jewish), the term παραθήκη “focuses on the common process of the depositor’s entrusting of his possession to an authorized agent who has pledged to safeguard the property intact until the time of reclamation.”246 Since here in 1 Tim 6:20 παραθήκη is set in contrast to the false teaching of the opponents, the term should be understood in a figurative sense. For Paul, παραθήκη refers to the passing on of the treasure of good teaching. This is confirmed in 2 Tim 1:14, where Paul commands his delegate: “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (τὴν καλὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον

242 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 120.
243 Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 371, states: “Wir haben hier eine geradezu klassische recapitulatio vor uns, gefolgt von einem knappen Schlußgruß.” See also Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 674, who suggests that the section sums up the positive and negative thrusts of the letter, though he says, “It is important to note that the positive point is the main one; heresy is a danger precisely because it threatens the truth of the gospel which is to be maintained.”
244 BDAG, s.v. “φυλάσσω.”
245 TLNT, s.v. “παραθήκη.” See also Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 26-39.
246 Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 27.
Two further matters related to the term παραθήκη require at least a short discussion: the originality of the term and the specific implication of “guarding the deposit.” Though the term is not found in the other Pauline letters, παραθήκη fits naturally in 1 and 2 Timothy. The heretical uprising in 1 Timothy and the inevitability of his death in 2 Timothy probably led Paul to use a term that clearly communicated the concept of entrustment. The shift from παράδοσις (1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15; 2 Thess 3:6) is simply a change to a term with a more obvious emphasis on protection. By “guarding the deposit,” Paul does not mean that Timothy is to store the gospel in the community vault, as if the delegate were some sort of passive security guard. The phrase τὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον must be understood in light of Paul’s other instructions to his delegate. Throughout 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul places great emphasis on the act of teaching/preaching (e.g., 1 Tim 4:6, 13, 16; 5:17; 2 Tim 3:16; 4:2). Thus, the implication here is that the gospel is protected as it is kept pure and proclaimed in its pure form.

B. Timothy Must Not Contemplate the Gnosis of the Opponents (vv. 20b-21a)
The second half of the appeal is negative; Paul tells the delegate: “turn away from the profane empty sounds and contradictions falsely called knowledge” (v. 20b). The verb ἐκτρέπω (“to turn”) is repeated from 1 Tim 1:6. With his first use of the verb in 1:6, Paul established a process of deviation: 1) the opponents have missed the mark (ἀστοχέω) of a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, 2) because of this they have turned to (ἐκτρέπω) a goal of their own devising, and 3) Paul refers to the opponents’ point of arrival as “empty speech” (ματαιολογία). Now, using identical or similar terms, Paul provides a plan for his delegate: 1) where the opponents have missed the mark (ἀστοχέω, v. 21a) of the faith, Timothy has received the gospel (παραθήκη), 2) because of this Timothy must turn away (ἐκτρέπω) from the false teaching, and 3) Paul refers to the false teaching as “empty sounds” (κενοφωνία). The participle ἐκτρεπόμενος is coordinate with the verb φυλάσσω (“guard and turn away”). Since I have suggested that safeguarding, in the context of the PD, requires proclamation of the gospel in its pure form, the “turning away” here should not be understood as a call for Timothy to disregard the opponents completely. Rather, the call is for Timothy to curb his interaction: he must proclaim the gospel to all people (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 4:5), but he must not contemplate, or be enticed by, the words of the opponents.251 In essence, Timothy is to ignore the teaching, but not the teachers themselves.252

The false teaching is first described as “profane chatter.” The adjective βέβηλος occurs in 1 Tim 1:9 and 1 Tim 4:7, and the phrase βεβήλους κενοφωνίας is repeated in 2 Tim 2:16. The term here refers to the “worldly” or “profane” content of the opponents. κενοφωνία occurs nowhere else in the NT (except for the repetition in 2 Tim 2:16), and

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251 We find the same sort of call in the letters of Ignatius. For example, in Ign. Eph. 7-10, a strong warning is issued regarding opponents, “You must shun (ἐκκλίνω) them as wild animals. For they are raving dogs who bite when no one is looking” (7). But the warning is immediately clarified by commendation, “But you did not permit them to sow any seeds among you, plugging your ears so as not to receive anything sown by them” (9), and a call for action, “Constantly pray for others; for there is still hope that they may repent so as to attain God” (10). Additionally, Ign. Smyrn. 7: “And so it is fitting to avoid (ἀπέχω) such people and not even to speak about them, either privately or in public, but instead to pay attention (προσέχω) to the prophets, and especially to the gospel.” The thrust of Ignatius’ argument appears to be that the faithful are to maintain a safe distance from the doctrine of the opponents, while at the same time showing concern for the salvation of the deviant ones.

252 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 676, hints at this: “This seems to refer to Timothy’s own attitude to such teachings: he is to avoid being enticed by them.”
there is only one known occurrence in the contemporary literature (Dioscurides, *De Materia Medica* 1. Pre. 2). Based on Hesychius’ claim that κενοφωνία and ματαιολογία are synonymous, the meaning “talk that has no value” has been suggested.²⁵³ Again, I contend that Paul has something more specific in mind.

As we saw with ματαιολογία, the meaning of a word may reflect the meaning of its component parts, and this is likely the case with κενοφωνία: κενός (“empty”) and φωνή (“sound”). The placement of the obscure word between two clear references to the apostolic gospel (παραθήκην, v. 20a; τὴν πίστιν, v. 21a) is helpful with respect to meaning. Most important is the fact that Paul has just commanded Timothy to safeguard the gospel, which necessarily involves proclamation. Interestingly, in the only other passage where κενοφωνία occurs, the term immediately follows Paul’s call for Timothy to be “an unashamed worker, by straightforwardly communicating the word of truth” (ἐργάτην ἀνεπαίσχυντον, ὃς ἐρήθη τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας). The proclamation of the gospel is prominent in both 1 Tim 6:20 and 2 Tim 2:15-16. Thus, we may now think of the apostolic gospel as the “full sound” or “powerful sound,” because it is the message that, when heard and believed, brings transformation.²⁵⁴ In contrast, the opponents utter only “empty sounds.” For Paul, κενοφωνία and ματαιολογία are indeed synonymous, though they probably should not be characterized as “generalized slander.”²⁵⁵ Paul appears to use the terms in a specific, theological sense, indicating that the message of the opponents

²⁵³ BDAG, s.v. “κενοφωνία.”
²⁵⁴ We find the same emphasis in Rom 10:14-17, and especially in v. 17: “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”
²⁵⁵ Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 311, insists that κενοφωνία is “being used as generalized slander.” Pietersen, *The Polemic of the Pastorals*, 120-121, 134, too quickly leaps from the canonical context to similar (though not identical) language of meaningless talk used by later writers to describe ecstatic prophecy. Pietersen concludes that the opponents “like those in 1 Corinthians, prize glossolalia which the author of the Pastorals dismisses as ‘meaningless talk.’” Like the odd claim of Dibelius and Conzelmann that I noted in my discussion of 1 Tim 6:5, Pietersen comes to the conclusion of glossolalia while at the same time arguing that βέβηλος, κενοφωνία, and ματαιολογία function as a “stock” charge against the opponents. Yet again, this appears to be an inconsistent way of interpreting the author’s polemic. How can a “stock” charge be mined for facts about the actual situation? Compare Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 556-557n30: “The parallels between the polemic of the Pastorals and that of the philosophers against the sophists clearly demonstrate the ‘stock’ character of the polemic of the Pastorals and caution one to separate the ‘stock’ charges from the charges that reflect the actual situation” (emphasis added).
lacks the power to transform. Moreover, by combining βήλος and κενοφωνία here in 1 Tim 6:20, Paul indicates that this message is powerless precisely because it is godless.

Finally, Paul refers to the opponents’ content as “contradictions falsely called knowledge.” ἀντίθεσις appears only here in the NT, but in contemporary literature the term clearly refers to an opposing idea or statement of contradiction (Plutarch, Mor. 953B; Philo, Ebr. 187). The fact that ἀντίθεσις is the title of one of Marcion’s works (Tertullian, Marc. 1.19.4; 2.29.1) is a mere coincidence, and as such, it should not lead to any conclusions about an anti-Marcionite polemic in 1 Timothy.256 Throughout the letter, Paul has set the false teaching in contrast to the apostolic gospel. Schlarb has demonstrated that the author’s contrastive strategy involves the use of words built on the verb τίθημι, the use of the α–privative prefixes ἀντί and ἀπό, and the use of the plural to describe the false teaching.257 Hence, the use of ἀντίθεσις here in 1 Tim 6:20 is a characteristic move, and the term is employed either to point out the self-contradictory nature of the false teaching or to indicate explicitly that the false teaching contradicts the apostolic gospel.258 The context and especially the interpretation of κενοφωνία I have suggested above make the latter option more likely. The adjective ψευδώνυμος is used only here in the NT, though elsewhere it pertains to something falsely named (Plutarch, Mor. 953B; Philo, Moses 2.171). The opponents’ content that was in reality empty and contradictory was going by the guise, “knowledge” (γνώσις).

The γνώσις of the opponents has been fiercely debated, but the fact of the matter is the word is extremely vague; thus, it would be unwise to think of the term as an indicator
of “Gnosticism.” Sumney rightly points out: “The word *gnosis* was a widely used term which could be applied to nearly any body of religious teaching, and was applied to many.” Since γνώσις is such a nebulous term, the clearer parts of 1 Timothy must dictate the way we explain the word here. Paul’s use of ψευδώνυμος does, in my estimation, suggest that the opponents were referring to their teaching as γνώσις.

Suggestive as well is the fact that, in 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul uses ἐπίγνωσις when he refers to the “knowledge” of the truth (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7). Perhaps he does so to make an incontrovertible distinction between the so-called knowledge of the opponents and the true comprehension of Christ that is associated with genuine conversion (1 Tim 2:4).

Towner has demonstrated that 1 Tim 6:20-21a and 2 Tim 2:15-18 bear remarkable resemblance to one another. First, in both passages, Timothy is told to pay careful attention to his treatment of the gospel (1 Tim 6:20a; 2 Tim 2:15). Second, in each passage, the false teaching Timothy is to avoid is described as τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας (1 Tim 6:20b; 2 Tim 2:16). Third, profession of the γνώσις, in the one case (1 Tim 6:21a), and of the resurrection heresy, in the other (2 Tim 2:17-18), has resulted in some people turning away from the Christian message (περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἡστόχησαν, 1 Tim 6:21a; περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἡστόχησαν, 2 Tim 2:18). Based on these links, Towner concludes: “At the center of the false teachers' gnosis was the belief that the resurrection of believers had already occurred.”

Though it must at this stage remain a tentative suggestion, I propose that it is because the opponents thought themselves to be citizens of the age to come (as mentioned above) that they claimed a special γνώσις. As with the opponents’ claims about marriage and food, Pauline teaching could have precipitated this claim to a unique knowledge. It was Paul himself who had written, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but

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260 Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 264. See also Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, 228-229, who discusses γνώσις or its equivalent in contexts that cannot be called “Gnostic.”


262 The following points are developed in Towner, “Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm,” 104–105.

263 Ibid., 104.
then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12). Hays speaks of “the patently eschatological language” of 1 Cor 13:12. The contrast, he writes, is clearly “the contrast between the present age and the age to come.”264 Again, I note that 1 Corinthians was written while Paul ministered in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8), so it is highly probable that this sort of teaching about a future, more complete knowledge would have circulated in Ephesus. Perhaps it was the opponents’ perceived eschatological vantage point that, in their judgment, enabled them to offer “new” readings of the law, readings that Paul categorized as “myths and endless genealogies that promote speculation” (1 Tim 1:4).

C. Summary of the Pericope

This short concluding section focuses on the entrustment of the apostolic teaching. The gospel is the treasure (παραθήκη) that Timothy has received from Paul and must now safeguard (φυλάσσω). The safeguarding of the gospel includes the proclamation of the gospel in its pure form (v. 20a). As he proclaims the gospel to all people, Timothy must not allow the false teachers to beguile him (vv. 20b-21a). These teachers promulgate a godless and therefore powerless message that nevertheless goes by the name γνώσις.

Though we must investigate the matter further, particularly when we come to 2 Tim 2:14-26, it seems at this stage likely that the opponents, thinking they were current citizens of the age to come, laid claim to a special knowledge. It could be that an element of this perceived eschatological existence was a hermeneutical awakening; because they thought they were living in the resurrection, the opponents thought they had eyes to see things in the Scriptures that others could not see (1 Tim 1:3-4, 7).

Conclusion

Our task in this chapter has been to examine the five explicit discourse units of 1 Timothy: 1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-5; 6:2b-5, 20-21a. Through what I hope has been careful exegesis, I have demonstrated that these passages are interpretively significant. Each unit supplies us with reliable information about the opponents in Ephesus. In certain units, Paul focuses on the opponents’ theology and ethics. At other times, Paul is interested in the influence of the opponents and how the Christian community was to interact with them. The data we have uncovered will need to be synthesized, though this task will be postponed until all the oppositional language of the letters has been studied. We move now to the implicit language of 1 Timothy.

264 Hays, First Corinthians, 229.
3
Exegetical Analysis of Implicit Units in 1 Timothy 1-3

Introduction

I will now seek to gather additional information on the opponents by focusing on the implicit language in 1 Timothy. I have defined implicit language as expressions that call the opponents to mind without mentioning them directly. Though there are various clues that might suggest the opponents are again in view (e.g., elaboration, expressed dissatisfaction, unfamiliar language)\(^1\) the most reliable piece of evidence is repetition. When significant words, phrases, or themes found in the explicit units are developed elsewhere in the letter, it is highly probable that the opponents are once more on Paul’s radar.\(^2\) With the explicit language of 1 Timothy as our guide, we are able to identify five additional pertinent discourse units: 1:8-11; 2:9-15; 4:6-10; 5:9-16; 6:6-10. The law clearly links 1:3-7 and 1:8-11. It will be demonstrated that the marriage prohibition from 4:1-5 surfaces as well in 2:9-15. The notion of godliness (4:1-5), along with the reference

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\(^{1}\) See Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter,” 84–85.

\(^{2}\) This is consistent with Sumney’s method. See, for example, Jerry L. Sumney, “Those Who ‘Ignorantly Deny Him’: The Opponents of Ignatius of Antioch,” *JECS* 1 (1993): 348: “We can identify a statement as an allusion only if it addresses an issue raised in explicit statements.” Though I agree with Sumney on the principle of repetition, we do not identify the same passages in 1 Timothy as allusions to the opponents (see “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 268–274). He finds implicit references to the opposition in 1:8-11; 2:4-7; 4:4, 7-8. Sumney uses Rom 3:29-30 as a bridge between 1 Tim 1:7 and 1 Tim 2:4-7, so he concludes that the law is central in the dispute over prayer. Limiting myself to 1 Timothy, I do not find significant themes from the explicit units repeated in 2:1-7 (on the mention of ἐὐσεβεία, see the note below). It is better to understand the language of 2:1-7 as neutral. Furthermore, it should be noted that though the ὅν of 2:1 certainly links 1:18-20 and 2:1-7, this does not necessarily mean that 2:1-7 deals with the doctrines of the opponents. The ὅν probably functions as a transition to paraenesis after the oppositional digression. See Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 418. One final point is worth mentioning. Even if I am mistaken, and 2:1-7 should be classified as implicit language, it appears that little if any data is lost, for Sumney concludes from this section only that the opponents’ interpretation of the law is at odds with Paul’s interpretation of the law. I will establish this point in my exegesis of 1:8-11.
to *myths* (1:3-7), makes 4:6-10 a significant section for our study.³ A number of themes are repeated in 5:9-16, such as the issue of *marriage* (4:1-5) and the association of some with *Satan* (1:18-20). Finally, the explicit comments about *godliness* and *gain* in 6:2b-5 means that the opponents probably are in view in 6:6-10. Since three of the selected discourse units are quite large, and since there exists an enormous amount of literature on 2:9-15, I will divide the implicit language into two parts. In the current chapter, I will focus on 1:8-11 and 2:9-15. In the following chapter, I will analyze the remaining implicit units in 1 Timothy. I will proceed, by and large, in my customary exegetical manner. Since the opponents are not directly in view in these pericopae, however, I cannot simply conclude each section by summarizing my exegesis; I will need to consider what exactly is reflected back to us from the exegesis.

I. Wrong Use of the Right Text (1 Tim 1:8-11)

As I hope to have demonstrated in my exegetical analysis of 1 Tim 1:3-7, the OT had an important place in the opponents’ teaching activities (e.g., νοµισµατικός λόγος, v. 7). I have also put forth the hypothesis that it was the opponents’ perceived eschatological vantage point that, in their judgment, enabled them to offer “new” readings of the law. Perhaps they boasted a more complete γνώσις (1 Tim 6:20) and offered imaginative readings that Paul categorized as “stories and endless accounts of ancestry, which produce useless speculations” (1 Tim 1:4). One of Paul’s problems with the opponents, then, was not that they *used the wrong text*, but that they *misused the right text*. This conclusion will be corroborated in my analysis of 1 Tim 1:8-11.⁴

A. The Law Must Be Used According to the Divine Design (v. 8)

³ Because “godliness” (εὐσέβεια) occurs many times in the letter, and sometimes is mentioned en passant (e.g., 1 Tim 2:2; 6:11), the decision has been made to discuss in detail only the sections of the letter that contain “godliness” along with an additional theme from the explicit passages.

⁴ Many scholars claim that the comments in this pericope are essentially non-Pauline. Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 206, writes: “There are no signs in the Pastorals of Paul’s view that the law convicts humanity of sin, let alone of the views that it leads to sin or that it cannot be fulfilled. Nor do we hear of any history-of-salvation role reserved for the law in God’s plan.” Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 41, adds: “The author [of 1 Timothy] presents as the only legitimate use of the law its application as a moral restraint on the lawless. This is far from Paul’s view (e.g., Rom 2:12-16; 3:20-31; 8:1-8; Gal 3:19-24) and the author does not develop it carefully.” I have argued elsewhere that the comments in 1 Tim 1:8-11 are in keeping with what the undisputed Paul says about the Mosaic law. See Dillon T. Thornton, “Sin Seizing an Opportunity through the Commandments: The Law in 1 Tim 1:8-11 and Rom 6-8,” *HBT* 36 (2014): 142-158.
The pericope begins with a sharp contrast: the opponents are ignorant of their subject matter (θέλοντες εἶναι νομοδιδάσκαλοι, μὴ νοοῦντες μὴ τῇ λέγουσιν μὴ τῶν διαβεβαιοῦνται, v. 7), but Paul and Timothy have accurately grasped the content of contention—the law (Οἶδαμεν δὲ τι καλὸς ὁ νόμος, v. 8). The verb οἶδα occurs over ninety times in the Pauline corpus. Paul often combines the first-person plural perfect form with ὅτι (undisputed: Rom 2:2; 3:19; 7:14; 8:22, 28; 1 Cor 8:1, 4; 2 Cor 5:1; disputed: 1 Tim 1:8). The general force of the formula is to indicate interpretive agreement; the writer and the recipients concur (generally speaking) with respect to a certain subject. Here, the subject of agreement is the law, and Paul affirms that the common Christian understanding is that the law is good and should be used properly. The formula does not signify that the insight would have been fully understood by every reader in Ephesus, but it does clarify the fact that the opponents are outside the mainstream. Two issues need to be explored further. What is the precise referent of νόμος? What exactly does Paul mean by καλὸς?

First, what is the meaning of νόμος in 1 Tim 1:8? My purpose here is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of Paul and the law—this would require at least an entire monograph. I seek only to understand Paul’s typical use(s) of the term, and then to examine this occurrence of the term within the larger context of 1 Timothy. Douglas Moo draws ten conclusions regarding the definition of νόμος in the Pauline literature. His conclusions are worth summarizing here. 1) Paul uses νόμος over one hundred times in his letters, but the term never occurs in the plural; Paul thinks of the law as a single entity. 2) The presence or absence of the article with νόμος provides no hint of meaning. 3) νόμος

5 See Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 80: “Οἶδαμεν is used by Paul to indicate that what he says is, in fact, the recognized Christian understanding of the subject, one that is commonly known, believed, and accepted.”

6 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 364, along with seeing the formula as an appeal to authoritative tradition, allows for it to be used as a means of teaching by giving the benefit of the doubt. In this latter case, the English equivalent would be something like: “We agree on this interpretation, do we not?”

7 With Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 122.


9 Against a number of interpreters, going back as far as Origen. For a full discussion of this point and a list of references, see Dunn, The Theology of Paul the
can refer generally to something laid down or ordered—a principle (e.g., Rom 7:21). 4) For the Jews of Paul's day, the torah was the heart of Scripture; Paul can refer to the Pentateuch in particular and the OT as a whole when he uses the term νόμος (e.g., Rom 3:19a; 1 Cor 9:8-9; 14:21; Gal 4:21b). 5) Paul most often uses νόμος to refer to requirements or systems of demands that are binding on people. 6) Paul occasionally uses νόμος to refer to the will of God, without regard to any definite, historical form in which that will is expressed (e.g., Rom 2:15, 26-27). 7) Vital for any accurate understanding of Paul’s doctrine of law is the realization that he uses νόμος most basically of the Mosaic law (e.g., Rom 5:20; Gal 3:19). 8) With respect to the Mosaic law, Paul typically means by νόμος the commands mediated through Moses, which is suggested by his references to the “doing” of the law. At the same time, however, Paul can expand this conception and use νόμος to refer to the Mosaic dispensation or covenant (e.g., Rom 6:14-15; 1 Cor 9:20; Gal 3:23; 4:4-5). 9) As Mosaic law, νόμος is for Paul a single indivisible whole; the logic of his argument prohibits a clear separation of ceremonial, civil, and moral law (e.g., Gal 5:3). 10) The interpretation of νόμος to mean legalism has its roots in a fundamentally flawed conception of Paul's use of the term.

Germane for our discussion is Moo’s seventh conclusion: Paul normally uses νόμος to refer to the Mosaic law. This means that, unless the context provides clear clues to the contrary, we may presume that when Paul speaks of ὁ νόμος or νόμος, he is thinking of the first five books of the sacred Scriptures attributed to Moses.

Apostle, 132–133. Dunn asserts: “The consensus is that no firm rule can be established on the basis of the article’s presence or absence. Context is a surer guide.”


On this point, see also Schreiner, The Law and Its Fulfillment, 33–40; Brian S. Rosner, Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God, NSBT 31 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 26-31, who concludes that νόμος most commonly denotes the first five books of the sacred Scriptures attributed to Moses.

Westerholm, Perspectives Old and New on Paul, 297, also concludes: “Paul sometimes uses 'law' (νόμος) to mean the Old Testament Scriptures, or more specifically the Pentateuch. But according to his most frequent usage, 'law' refers to the Sinaitic legislation.”

“Normally” is my gloss on Moo’s assertion: “What is vital for any accurate understanding of Paul’s doctrine of law is to realize that Paul uses nomos most often and most basically of the Mosaic law.” See Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” 80.
of the Mosaic law. Since this entire section (1 Tim 1:8-11) is a response to the opponents, who likely used parts of the Pentateuch to support their deviant doctrine (1 Tim 1:3-7), there is no good reason to reject the notion that these, the only two occurrences of νόμος in the PD, are references to the law of Moses. More specifically, the Sinaitic legislation—the sum of divine requirements given to Israel through Moses—is likely the precise referent of νόμος (see Moo’s eighth assertion above). When Paul argues in v. 9a that the law is not for the righteous, he cannot mean the Pentateuch or the OT as Holy Scripture, since in the same letter he calls for devotion to the public reading of Scripture (4:13) and finds general principles from the OT that are still relevant for the Christian community (e.g., the use of Deut 25:4 in 1 Tim 5:18).

Second, what exactly does Paul mean when he says that the Mosaic law is good (καλὸς ὁ νόμος)? καλὸς is a key word in the PD, occurring sixteen times in 1 Timothy, three times in 2 Timothy, and five times in Titus. The term occurred in two of the explicit units in 1 Timothy. Now, Paul affirms the goodness of the law of God. Similar affirmations are found in Romans: “So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (ὡστε ὁ μὲν νόμος ἀγιὸς καὶ ἡ ἐντολὴ ἀγιὰ καὶ δικαία καὶ ἀγαθὴ, 7:12), and “I agree that the law is good” (σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλὸς, 7:16). To say here in 1 Tim 1:8 that the law is “good” is to put it in the same category as Paul and Timothy’s “fight” (e.g., 1 Tim 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7) and the believer’s “deeds” (e.g., 1 Tim 5:10, 25; 6:18; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14), which are deemed “good” because of affiliation with God

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14 With Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 39; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 133; idem, “Paul and the Torah: The Role and Function of the Law in the Theology of Paul the Apostle,” in *The New Perspective on Paul*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 447-467: “By nomos Paul almost always means the law per se, Israel’s Torah. But the reference can be narrow, to a particular commandment; or it can be broader - to scripture at large, or the will and wisdom of God expressed through scripture” (460-461, emphasis original).


16 See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:18 and 1 Tim 4:4 in the previous chapter.
The battle Paul and Timothy fight is a “good” battle because God is the one who has enlisted them; thus, they struggle for God’s purposes. Likewise, “good” works flow only from the one whom God has inwardly transformed. The regenerate community has been rendered capable of pleasing God with their works (see especially 1 Tim 1:5; Titus 2:14; 3:8). But 1 Tim 1:8 is unique in that the affirmation of “goodness” is accompanied by a conditional clause (ἐάν τις αὐτῷ νομίμως χρῆται). Because of this, we may conclude that the emphasis here is not precisely the same as in Rom 7:12, for there the point seems to be that the law is inherently good due to its divine origin. This is not to say that 1 Timothy denies the point made in Romans. Paul affirms in 1 Tim 4:4 that every creation of God, which would certainly include the law, is good. But it is to say that here in 1 Tim 1:8 the stress falls on the conditional statement: “goodness,” in this instance, is directly related to the application of the law.

The law, Paul contends, is good “if one uses it lawfully” (ἐάν τις αὐτῷ νομίμως χρῆται). The use of ἐάν with the subjunctive mood (χρῆται) can be classified as a third class condition, otherwise known as a present general condition. The clause simply sets a logical limit on how the law is good: “it is good, provided that…” Within the parameters of the Pauline corpus, the verb χράομαι occurs only in the letters to the Corinthians and in the first letter to Timothy (1 Cor 7:21, 31; 9:12, 15; 2 Cor 1:17; 3:12; 17 Similarly, Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 123, who argues that καλὸς in the PD is applied to “things that are intrinsically good or derive their virtue from divine authority and so serve God’s purposes.”

18 This is consistent with the undisputed Paul’s comments. He claims in Rom 8:8, for example: “And those who are in the flesh are not able to please God” (οἱ δὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντες θεῷ ἄρεσαι οὐ δύνανται). Of course, this does not mean that regenerate man always pleases God, but it does mean that the one who is in Christ (Rom 6:11-14) or in the Spirit (Rom 8:9-13) is able to please the Father.

19 See Douglas J. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 440–441. In his treatment of Rom 7:12, Moo concludes that in calling the law “holy” Paul is describing its origin—it was given by the one who is in his nature holy. He adds that “good” denotes the nature of the law, attributing to it that goodness which is characteristic of God himself.

20 With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 45; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 375; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 167; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 123.

21 Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 689.

22 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 33.

The verb means “to employ” or “to make use.” Crucial for Paul is the “lawful” (νομίμως) use of the law (νόμος). The adverb νομίμως occurs only once in the LXX (4 Macc 6:18) and once more in the NT. In 2 Tim 2:5 the term is used of an athlete who competes according to the regulations of the contest (έαν δὲ καλὶ ἀθλήῃ τις, σὺ στεφανοῦται ἐὰν μὴ νομίμως ἀθλήῃ). Here in 1 Tim 1:8, then, the word refers to application of the law that is in accordance with the purposes of the divine lawgiver. Why the law was given and for whom it was given indicate the “lawful” use. Paul goes on to show that the opponents have not heeded the divine directions; therefore, they are guilty of a deplorable use of the law.

Before proceeding to v. 9, we should ponder briefly the Pauline development: from “the law is good” (Rom 7:12) to “the law is good, if...” (1 Tim 1:8). While this could be a sign of a later pseudonymous author, who here steps outside the Pauline tradition, such a suggestion does not give due weight to the hostile context of 1 Timothy, which, in my view, best accounts for the shift to the conditional statement. Nothing uncovered in 1 Timothy thus far suggests that the opponents were antinomians, arguing for emancipation from the law. To the contrary, the opponents were vehemently concerned with the proclamation of their deviant doctrine, for which they found support in the law (1 Tim 1:3-7). Thus, καλὸς ὁ νόμος probably is not an assertion with which the opponents would have taken issue. The problem was not with the opponents’ assessment of the law, but with their handling of it. It is justifiable to say that in 1 Timothy Paul implicitly affirms the inherent goodness of the law by declaring that all of creation is good (1 Tim 4:4). But this is not the explicit emphasis of 1 Tim 1:8. Since the opponents in Ephesus endorsed the law, the emphasis needed to fall on the goodness of the law as it is rightly interpreted and applied. When Paul calls the law “good” in 1 Tim 1:8, he has

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24 BDAG, s.v. “χράομαι.”

25 Eleazor cries out: “For it would be irrational if having lived in accordance with truth up to old age, and having rightly (νομίμως) guarded the reputation of such a life, we should now change our course...”

26 Stephen Westerholm, “The Law and the ‘Just Man’ (1 Tim 1.3-11),” ST 36 (1982): 82, suggests we might render νομίμως “in line with its intended purpose.”

27 Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 81.

28 See, for example, Hanson, The Pastoral Epistles, 58–59, who claims that the qualification is a divergence from the authentic Paul; Räisänen, Paul and the Law, 206, who suggests that in 1 Tim 1:8 “the view of the character of the law is quite different.”

29 Porter, “Did Paul Have Opponents in Rome and What Were They Opposing?,” 149–168, concludes that the level of conflict Paul had with antagonists in Rome was
in mind the good results that come only when the law is used as God intends.

B. The Law Was Not Instituted for Those in the Realm of Righteousness (vv. 9-11)

1. The Law is Not for the Righteous (v. 9a)

The participial phrase εἰδὼς τοῦτο qualifies the indefinite pronoun in v. 8 and introduces the legitimate use of the law Paul here has in mind. The way to use the law properly is by knowing that it was “not given for the righteous” (δικαίως νόμος οὗ κεῖται). The undisputed Paul uses the verb κεῖμαι four times (1 Cor 3:11; 2 Cor 3:15; Phil 1:16; 1 Thess 3:3). The term has as its most basic meaning “to lie” or “to be laid”30 (Homer, Od. 11.557) but later came to mean “to be situated” (Herodotus, Persian War 5.49). The verb can also be used specifically for the establishment of laws (Aristophanes, Plut. 914; Euripides, Hec. 292; Xenophon, Mem. 4.4.21).31 Paul employs the verb with the most basic meaning in 1 Cor 3:11—“no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid (κεῖμαι), which is Jesus Christ”—and in 2 Cor 3:15—“a veil lies (κεῖμαι) over their hearts.” But since here in 1 Tim 1:9 the term is linked with the “law” it likely refers to institution. δικαίωμα is best classified as a dative of interest.32 According to Paul, the Mosaic law was not instituted in the interest of the δίκαιος. But who exactly is the δίκαιος?

The term δίκαιος occurs often in the Pauline letters (undisputed: Rom 1:17; 2:13; 3:10, 26; 5:7; 19; 7:12; Gal 3:11; Phil 1:7; 4:8; disputed: Eph 6:1; Col 4:1; 2 Thess 1:5; 1 Tim 1:9; 2 Tim 4:8; Titus 1:8). The usage of δίκαιος and its cognates elsewhere in the PD suggests that one’s way of living, rather than one’s standing before God, is intended in 1 Tim 1:9.33 Paul does not appear to use the term here with the pregnant theological sense it often bears. The general meaning, then, is “righteous,” “upright,” or “innocent.”34 But we can venture a bit further and say that, though justification by faith is not directly in view

much less than in other cities. It is perhaps for this reason that his unqualified affirmation of the law was sufficient in Romans. In 1 Timothy, the level of hostility and type of disagreement probably necessitated the qualification.

30 See Hübner, EDNT, s.v. “κεῖμαι.”
31 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 168, is informative with respect to semantic development.
32 Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 142; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 377n45.
33 δικαιοσύνη is a virtue among others in 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22.
here, Paul has in mind “the Christian as right-living person.” This is made clear by the close of the vice list in 1 Tim 1:10-11. The law is not given for the δίκαιος (v. 9a), but the law is given for those who oppose the healthy doctrine, which is “in accordance with the gospel” (κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, v. 11). Therefore, δίκαιος, in this context, must allude to the sort of living that is in accordance with the gospel. The term functions here in the same way the πίστις-ἀγάπη alignment functions in 1 Tim 1:5; the reference to the outer life pleasing to God necessarily includes an inner posture of belief in and commitment to Christ. In essence, Paul’s assertion in v. 9a is that the Mosaic law was not instituted for the one who has been transferred from the realm of sin and now lives in the realm of righteousness.

2. The Law is for the Wicked (vv. 9b-11)

The Mosaic law was not instituted for the Christian who lives righteously; rather, it was given for “sundry sorts of sinners,” which Paul makes explicit by crafting a vice list. Scholars agree that the form of the list is at least partially determined by the Decalogue. George Knight has argued that the entire list reflects the Decalogue. Knight’s theory is possible, though it is better to say only that we find a precise connection from πατρολόφως forward. It is proper to speak of a pattern of selectivity with respect to the Decalogue in the NT. When Paul clearly echoes the Decalogue elsewhere

35 Westerholm, “The Law and the ‘Just Man’ (1 Tim 1.3-11),” 84, emphasis original. See also Rosner, Paul and the Law, 73; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 35, who claims: “The only person who lives righteously is the one who has been made righteous”; Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 11, who says that the righteous person is the one in whom the love of God has been created.

36 See the discussion in Thornton, “Sin Seizing an Opportunity through the Commandments,” 142-158.

37 Westerholm, “The Law and the ‘Just Man’ (1 Tim 1.3-11),” 83.


39 See Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 84–85. He takes the first two terms of the list (ἀνομος and ἀνυπότακτος) to be introductory and claims that the order of the Decalogue seems to give a satisfactory explanation of the list from ἀσεβής forward. Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 169, follows: “The first two terms are, in effect, synonyms for not being controlled by moral norms. The rest of the terms follow the basic lines of the Ten Commandments.”
he omits certain commands (undisputed: Rom 2:21-23; 7:7; 13:9; disputed: Eph 6:1-3).\(^{40}\) Jesus’ list is also incomplete (e.g., Matt 19:18-19). These texts should cause us to balk at the notion of comprehensiveness in the vice list of 1 Tim 1:9b-10. But given the prominence of the Decalogue, to mention a few commandments was probably to bring them all to mind. Here in 1 Timothy, Paul follows the order of the MT (Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21) and makes clear reference to the fifth through ninth commandments, as my discussion of the contents of the list will reveal.

The list is compiled of four pairs of sinners, followed by six single designations. Rebellion is the common denominator of the first pair. The undisputed Paul can use \(\alpha\nu\nu\o\mu\o\phi\o\varsigma\) to refer to Gentiles as those “outside the law” (1 Cor 9:21), but here the idea is behaving as if there were no law.\(^{41}\) \(\alpha\nu\nu\o\pi\o\tau\a\k\tau\o\varsigma\) is found only in the PD (1 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:6, 10) and in Heb 2:8. It pertains to refusing submission to authority.\(^{42}\) The second pair—\(\alpha\nu\sigma\varepsilon\b\i\h\varsigma\) (“ungodly” or “godless”) and \(\alpha\mu\a\r\a\r\t\o\w\o\l\o\varsigma\) (“sinner”)—denotes separation from God and therefore distance from salvation.\(^{43}\) The crucifixion of the Son was required for the “ungodly” (\(\alpha\nu\sigma\varepsilon\b\i\h\varsigma\), Rom 5:6) and the “sinner” (\(\alpha\mu\a\r\a\r\t\o\w\o\l\o\varsigma\), Rom 5:8) to be reconciled to the Father. The terms \(\alpha\nu\o\xi\o\s\o\varsigma\) and \(\beta\e\b\e\h\ll\o\varsigma\) are near synonyms for unholy behavior. \(\alpha\nu\o\xi\o\s\o\varsigma\) occurs in the NT only in the PD (1 Tim 1:9; 2 Tim 3:2), but it is used several times in the LXX.\(^{44}\) The word pertains to being in opposition to God or what is sacred.\(^{45}\) \(\beta\e\b\e\h\ll\o\varsigma\), best translated “worldly” or “profane,”\(^{46}\) is the only term in the vice list that is repeated elsewhere with clear reference to the opponents (1 Tim 4:7; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:16).

We find in the final pair and the first single designation a precise connection to the Decalogue. The three NT hapaxes—\(\pi\a\tau\o\r\o\l\o\w\a\varsigma\), \(\mu\i\t\o\r\o\l\o\w\a\varsigma\), and \(\a\n\d\r\o\f\o\f\o\n\o\varsigma\)—reflect the fifth and the sixth commandments, according to the MT. \(\pi\a\tau\o\r\o\l\o\w\a\varsigma\) refers to one who

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41 See Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 379.
42 BDAG, s.v. “\(\alpha\nu\nu\o\pi\o\tau\a\k\tau\o\varsigma\).”
43 Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 43.
44 See 2 Macc 7:34; 8:32; 3 Macc 2:2; 5:8; 4 Macc 12:11; Wis 12:4; Ezek 22:9.
45 BDAG, s.v. “\(\alpha\nu\o\xi\o\s\o\varsigma\).”
46 See TLNT, s.v. “\(\beta\e\b\e\h\ll\o\varsigma\).”
slays his father. 47 μητρολύας is the designation for one who kills his mother. 48 ἀνδροφόνος refers to the murderer in general. 49 The next two designations reflect the seventh commandment. πόρνος occurs a number of times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: 1 Cor 5:9-11; 6:9; disputed: Eph 5:5); it indicates the broad category of “sexual immorality.” 50 ἀρσενοκοίτης occurs in the NT only here and in 1 Cor 6:9; it provides a specific example of sexual rebellion. 51 Paul moves to the eighth commandment with the dramatic example of stealing another person’s freedom. The hapax ἄνδραποδιστής is best translated as “kidnapper” or “slave-dealer.” 52 The final two terms of the list parallel the ninth commandment. As he did when he made contact with the seventh commandment, Paul provides a broad and a specific example. The word ψεύστης (“liar”) appears two other times in the Pauline writings (undisputed: Rom 3:4; disputed: Titus 1:12) and a number of times in John (1 John 1:10; 2:4, 22; 4:20; 5:10). ἐπιόρκος (“false oath-taker”) 53 is a NT hapax, though the term appears in the LXX (Zech 5:3), and the verbal form appears in Matt 5:33. The two closing terms call attention to the one who utters untruths.

Paul concludes the list with a catchall category: the law is given for “anything else that opposes healthy teaching” (καὶ εἰ τι ἐτερων τῇ ὑγιαινούσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ ἀντίκειται). He probably uses the verb ἀντίκειμαι (“to be opposed”) 54 to associate the opponents in Ephesus with the individuals just enumerated. 55 The false teachers stand among the wicked, those for whom the law was given, those who oppose “the healthy teaching” (τῇ ὑγιαινούσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ). The authoritative Christian teaching, which is again described as free from pathogenic content and viewed as positively health producing, 56 includes Paul’s

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47 See the alternate spelling, πατραλοίας, in Aristophanes, Nub. 911, 1327; Josephus, Ant. 16.356; Lucian, Peregr. 21.
48 See Plato, Leges, 881A; Phaed. 114A (πατραλοίας καὶ μητραλοίας).
49 See 2 Macc 9:28; also grouped with the first two terms in Plato, Phaed. 114A.
50 BDAG, s.v. “πόρνος.”
51 For the verbal form, see Sibylline Oracles 2.73. On translation questions associated with ἀρσενοκοίτης, see Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 170; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 127-128, with ample bibliography.
52 See, for example, Herodotus, Persian War 1.151; Plato, Resp. 344B; Xenophon, Mem. 4.2.14.
53 BDAG, s.v. “ἐπιόρκος.”
54 BDAG, s.v. “ἀντίκειμαι.”
56 See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:2b-5 in the previous chapter.
interpretation of the Mosaic law. The entire body of apostolic doctrine is “in accordance with” or “in conformity to” (κατά) the good news of the person and work of Jesus Christ (εὐαγγέλιον). Though the confusing string of genitives could be translated in a wide range of ways, it seems best to translate the final part of v. 11: “the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ). Where the Mosaic law reveals sin (vv. 9b-10), the apostolic gospel makes known the wonder of God’s grace and mercy expressed in the Christ event (v. 11). This gospel that unveils the glory of the transcendent God was entrusted to Paul (ὅ ἐπιστεῦθη ἐγώ), and he is responsible to preserve it in the face of error.

C. Summary and Reflection

I will conclude this section by summarizing my exegetical findings and considering the data that has been reflected back to us. Paul indicated in 1 Tim 1:7 that, irrespective of their ignorance, the opponents desire to teach the Mosaic law (θέλοντες εἶναι νομοδιδάσκαλοι). The fact that they used the law leads me to conclude that they would have agreed with the Pauline assertion: “the law is good” (καλὸς ὁ νόμος). Perhaps they argued: “We are not following human traditions or human interpretations. We

57 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 102–103, define the “healthy teaching” as the Pauline interpretation of the OT.

58 Even if the κατά phrase qualifies τῇ ὑγιαινούσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ (Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 89-90), the proper use of the law (vV. 8-10) is a tenet of the apostolic teaching (“healthy teaching,” v. 10) which is in accordance with the gospel; thus, it is right to say that the prepositional phrase is connected generally to vv. 8-10. See the discussion in Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 108; Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 1:336; Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 79; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 382. By this time, εὐαγγέλιον had become the standard term for the Christian message of salvation. See TLNT, s.v. “εὐαγγέλιον.”

59 With most commentators. See, for example, Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 51; Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 79; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 47; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 43; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 132. A thorough treatment of the interpretive options can be found in Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 382–383.

60 On the implicit function of the law in vv. 9b-10, see Thornton, “Sin Seizing an Opportunity through the Commandments,” 142-158.

61 This is the sense of μακάριος here, especially since the only other time it occurs in 1 Timothy it is linked with God’s supreme power and authority (ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάμεως, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ κύριος τῶν κυριεύσαντων, 1 Tim 6:15).

62 See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:20-21a in the previous chapter.

establish our idea on Scripture." Undoubtedly, this would have lent verisimilitude to their claims. But the opponents did not wield the law properly. In 1 Tim 1:8, Paul emphasizes that the law is good as it is employed according to the divine design. By disregarding the directions of the lawgiver, the opponents have become guilty of some unlawful use of the Mosaic law. The clear point of contention in vv. 9-10 is: for whom was the Mosaic law instituted? The law, Paul says, is not meant for believers, because believers have been transferred from the realm where the law, sin, and death exercise dominion to the realm of righteousness (v. 9a). On the contrary, the law is for the wicked, which Paul emphasizes by citing a number of despicable individuals (vv. 9b-10). With the one exception of their “profane” message, there is no evidence elsewhere in the letter that the false teachers were committing the precise crimes mentioned in the vice list. But Paul does seek to locate the opponents in the company of the depraved. By affiliating them with the individuals in the list (ἀντίκειμαι, v. 10), Paul shows that the opponents are, quite ironically, condemned by the very law they aspire to teach.

This reading of 1 Tim 1:8-11 confirms that, in Paul’s judgment, the opponents are not genuine believers (1 Tim 1:3-7; 4:1-5). Here, they are implicitly located with the wicked. My analysis of vv. 8-11 also confirms that the law had a key place in the opponents’ teaching activities (1 Tim 1:3-7). Since this pericope is clearly a response to the false teachers (1:7), and since the thrust of the section is that the law was not instituted for the righteous, we may conclude with confidence that the opponents were misusing the Mosaic law by applying it to Christians in some way that dissatisfied Paul. Paul has already indicated that the opponents are “preoccupied with stories and endless accounts of ancestry, which produce useless speculations rather than the redemptive arrangement of God that is by faith” (1 Tim 1:4). I have argued that these stories and accounts of ancestry stemmed from the OT. Thus, based on the evidence uncovered thus far, we can say that the opponents used the law to support their soteriological arrangement, which they promulgated in place of the apostolic gospel.

64 LW 28.229.
65 Irenaeus’ comment is appropriate here: “These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation” (Haer. 1.Pre.1, emphasis added).
66 See μηλος in 1 Tim 4:7; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:16. Since I am working from the premise that the opponents in Ephesus (1 and 2 Timothy) and those in Crete (Titus) must be treated separately, the fact that Paul uses ἀνυπότακτος in reference to the opponents in Titus 1:10 is irrelevant.
II. Women at Worship (1 Tim 2:9-15)

The innumerable treatments of 1 Tim 2:9-15 have yielded a variety of theories regarding the identity and involvement of the opponents. I will begin this section by summarizing a selection from the miscellany and showing that many of the extant theories can safely be dismissed as implausible. I will then offer my own exegetical analysis of the passage.

Sharon Gritz suggests that “former devotees” of the Artemis cult may be behind the teaching of 1 Tim 2:9-15. Gritz argues that the Phrygian Cybele became identified with the Greek Artemis in the city of Ephesus. The cult of Cybele was orgiastic and ecstatic. Greek poetry typically describes Artemis as a huntress and destroyer, while some older testimonies portray her as the patroness of wild animals. Gritz proposes that the Greek settlers of Ephesus adopted the already-established cult of Cybele and identified Cybele with their own Artemis. Thus, the Ephesian Artemis became “the deity of the reproductive powers of nature and the source of overflowing life.” This hybrid cult was especially appealing to women, and Ephesus became a bulwark of women’s rights. Based on this understanding of the Artemis cult, Gritz suggests that converts from the cult may have overturned the Genesis account and glorified Eve. This is likely, she claims,
since the myths of Cybele and Attis, from which the Ephesian Artemis sprang, emphasized the creation of the goddess first. Gritz concludes that Paul is here deflating the idea of female superiority that was attached to the Artemis cult.72

Though Gritz, by and large, provides a careful exegetical analysis of 1 Tim 2:9-15, many of her claims about the Ephesian Artemis are widely contested. For example, she states: “The image of the Artemis of Ephesus featured a human head, hands, and many breasts. These multiplied signs of her motherhood symbolized her fertility.”73 But a number of scholars have pointed to the silence of all primary sources about this supposed link to fertility, and modern scholarship has reached no agreement with respect to what these egg-shaped objects on the front of the cult image actually are.74 Trebilco concludes: “While there was undoubtedly Anatolian and other influence on the goddess in the Roman period, none of our evidence suggests that fertility was thought to be a prominent characteristic of Artemis at this time.”75

Philip Payne finds two opposing factions in the Ephesian church: a Judaizing faction and an antinomian libertarian faction.76 He further concludes that women “were in the forefront of the libertarian trend.”77 Payne argues that the history of the church in Ephesus, as described in Acts and Ephesians, sets the stage for the rise of these two extreme parties. Payne discusses three periods of development in Ephesus. The first period was the reasoning with Jews in the synagogue (Acts 18:19-21). The nucleus for the church was established when a number of Jews (or proselytes strongly influenced by

documents that, contrary to the title of the book, are not “ancient” enough to be called “evidence.” For example, they rely heavily on On the Origin of the World (see especially 117-125). The likely date of composition of On the Origin of the World, as we now have it, is the late third or early fourth century, though the text may be based on earlier, second-century material. In this case, even the possible earlier material is too late to be considered evidence of the false teaching we find in the PD. See Meyer, The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, 202; Birger A. Pearson, Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 69.

73 Ibid., 38.
75 Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 23.
77 Ibid, 185.
Judaism) were baptized into the name of the Lord. The second stage of growth included a group of mostly Gentiles with wild pasts (Acts 19-20). Sometime after the period of the Jewish founding fathers and the subsequent stage of influx of Gentiles, Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians. Payne argues that the Ephesian letter represents the third period of development. In this stage, Paul appears to be addressing a primarily Gentile audience (e.g., Eph 2:11-13; 4:17-24). Payne finds in Ephesians many of the problems addressed in 1 Timothy: false teaching, controversies, meaningless talk, Judaizers, and antinomianism. From these proposed stages of development, Payne concludes: “By the time Paul writes 1 Timothy the situation is not hard to imagine. In the face of Gentiles who had picked up Paul’s teaching about freedom and carried it too far, it was only natural for the Jewish elements of the church, which still included the powerful founding fathers, to be tempted to return to the tried and true Jewish ways which prohibited the kind of rowdiness which had developed.”

While Payne’s proposal arguably is in line with Acts, it is inconsistent with the data contained in 1 Timothy. Paul provides no clear hints that more than one group of false teachers are in view. Though his references to the false teachers are often vague (τίς), he never speaks of “this party” and “that party.” Without some sort of clear indicator that there are multiple groups of opponents, the only reason to draw such a conclusion would be if the letter combated two or more errant doctrines that seem to be incompatible (e.g., if Paul wrote in one part of the letter that opponents forbid marriage and he claimed in another section of the letter that opponents discourage singleness). I have yet to find irreconcilable ideas among the opponents in 1 Timothy. Additionally, I have found no traces of the parties that Payne claims were prominent. The opponents certainly used the Mosaic law (1 Tim 1:3-7, 8-11), but it does not appear that they argued for a full-scale adoption of the law, since we find no reference to circumcision. Thus, the

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., 187.
82 The words ἐν Ἐφέσῳ (Eph 1:1) are absent from several important witnesses (P 46 ε* Β* etc.), so Ephesians probably should not be used to reconstruct the situation in Ephesus. See the discussion in Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 89–94.
83 Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter,” 85: “Unless we have strong evidence to suggest that Paul is responding to more than one type of opponent or argument, we should assume that a single object is in view.”
opponents should not be called antinomians or Judaizers—they fall somewhere between these two poles.\textsuperscript{84}

Though the aforementioned authors propose different theories, they agree that identifying the opponents is a necessary step if one is to rightly interpret 1 Tim 2:9-15. J.M. Holmes, on the other hand, claims there is nothing to suggest that the teaching in 2:9-15 is connected to the opponents in Ephesus. Holmes concludes: “The idea that the false teachers of the Pastoral Epistles constitute a more or less loosely unified group which emerged and continues to function within the assemblies at the places of address at the time of writing is a misconception.”\textsuperscript{85} Furthermore, Holmes classifies the sections of the letter that draw attention to women (1 Tim 2:11-15; 4:3; 5:11-15; 2 Tim 3:6-7; Titus 2:3-5) as “general teaching considered by the Author relevant anywhere. It is an inappropriate source for the identification of female asceticism and rejection of traditional roles so frequently included in reconstructions of background for the Pastorals.”\textsuperscript{86} While Holmes is right to react against the elaborate theories of interpreters who feel free to go beyond the boundaries of the primary text, she downplays the false teachers and is over-cautious in her handling of the evidence in 1 Timothy.\textsuperscript{87} It is highly likely that the opponents are more involved in 1 Tim 2:9-15 than Holmes leads us to believe, because at least one clear theme from the explicit language occurs in this pericope, as I will demonstrate in the exegesis below.

In sum, the multiple faction theory (Judaizers and antinomian libertarians) is inconsistent with the explicit language of 1 Timothy. Additionally, the Artemis cult reconstruction goes considerably beyond the evidence contained in the primary text. Moo provides an important hermeneutical control, which I will adopt: “We must be very careful about allowing any specific reconstruction—tentative and uncertain as it must


\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 185.

\textsuperscript{87} There are other problems with Holmes’ thesis. Perhaps the greatest deficiency is the argument that 1 Tim 2:9-15 does not address the gathered church. See Holmes, \textit{Text in a Whirlwind}, 300: “The foregoing study rejects the proposition that 1 Tim. 2.12 prohibits women in the gathered assembly…” This is scarcely the case, especially since in 2:1-7 Paul seems to be concerned with corporate prayer, and in 3:1-7 Paul moves to the qualifications of those who care for God’s church. It would appear that throughout the entire section (2:1-3:13) Paul has the gathered church in mind. For a fair assessment of Holmes’ work, see I. Howard Marshall, review of J.M. Holmes, \textit{Text in a Whirlwind: A Critique of Four Exegetical Devices at 1 Timothy} 2.9-15, Evangel 20.2 (2002): 60-61.
be—to play too large a role in our exegesis. We will, then, take a cautious approach to this matter. In our exegesis, we will use only those aspects of the false teaching that may be clearly inferred from the pastoral epistles and related New Testament passages to shed light on the text."\(^8^8\) With respect to the role of women, all that may be said from the explicit units in 1 Timothy is that the opponents prohibited marriage (1 Tim 4:3), which most likely means they required abstinence from sexual activity. With respect to the opponents’ sources, it is clear that they found support for their deviant doctrine in the law (1:3-7, 8-11), but I have argued that there is insufficient evidence to suggest that they fixated on the creation account.\(^8^9\) Finally, against Holmes, I find in 1 Tim 2:9-15 a number of elements from the explicit language (Satan, deception, and the prohibition of marriage), which means that the opponents probably are reflected in this pericope. Thus, I enter the interpretive imbroglio not with high hopes of once for all resolving every dilemma, but with the goal of distilling the data that is most relevant for our study.\(^9^0\)

A. Women Are to Adorn Themselves Appropriately for Worship (vv. 9-10)

First Timothy 2:9-15 is part of the larger unit (2:1-3:13) that deals with orderly worship and qualified leaders in the house of God. Paul progresses from a general call to prayer (2:1-2), to a more specific expression of his desire for the Christian men in Ephesus to pray in a peaceable manner (2:8). The prepositional phrase in v. 8, ἐν παντὶ τῷ ἐπίσκοπῳ ("in every place") probably refers to house churches, which confirms that the context of this entire section is corporate worship.\(^9^1\) Paul then transitions to instructions

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\(^8^9\) See the discussion of 1 Tim 4:1-5 in the previous chapter.

\(^9^0\) This will not be the place, then, to attend to questions such as: Is the teaching prohibition of v. 12 normative for believers today or is it limited to the original context? The most thorough argument for a complementarian position is made by Thomas R. Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). For a very thoughtful presentation of the egalitarian argument, see David M. Scholer, “1 Timothy 2.9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church’s Ministry,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Deutero-Pauline Epistles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 98–121.

for women at worship (2:9-15). Though some interpreters insist that γυνή should be translated as “wife,” the context of corporate worship indicates that the broader meaning, “woman,” is likely intended.

The section on women begins with a marker of similarity (ὡσαύτως, “likewise”). The adverb ὡσαύτως requires that the previous verb (βούλοµαι, “to desire”), or perhaps the larger idea of prayer (προσεύχοµαι), be carried over from Paul’s comments to the men. The first part of v. 9, then, could be translated: “Likewise, I desire for women to pray…” or “Likewise, I desire for women…” Since Paul provides another infinitive in v. 9 (κοσµεῖν), it seems more likely, at least syntactically, that he does not intend the infinitive of v. 8 to carry over to v. 9. While we may assume that Paul wanted women in all the churches to engage appropriately in prayer (e.g., 1 Cor 11:2-16), this does not seem to be the concern in 1 Tim 2:9.


Most notably, Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim. 2:8-15,” JETS 35 (1992): 341. See also Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus, 125–140. Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 191, think that all women are in view in vv. 9-10, but beginning in v. 11 the reference shifts to wives. They translate vv. 11-12: “Let a married women quietly learn in the assemblies for worship and quite obediently. Moreover, I do not allow a wife to teach in the public worship and to boss her husband.”

With Moo, “1 Tim 2:11-15,” 63; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 71; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 444; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 199; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 92–94; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 130–133. καί is found between ὡσαύτως and γυναῖκας in ε2 D* F G K L, and τάς follows it in the Byzantine tradition. Since the oldest manuscripts (and the majority of witnesses) omit it, and since addition can be explained as an attempt to follow the style of 1 Tim 5:25 (ὡσαύτως καί), I conclude that the evidence slightly favors omission. Following Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 131–132; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 199.

See the discussion in Moo, “What Does It Mean to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2.11-15,” 182; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 132; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 112–113; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 204.
Here, Paul states that his desire is for women to “adorn themselves” (κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς) appropriately for worship. The verb κοσμέω refers to the sort of decoration that makes one attractive. The term can be used literally (outer beauty) and figuratively (inner beauty). In vv. 9-10, Paul oscillates between the literal and the figurative sense. It will become clear in this subsection that, for Christian women, internal qualities are to take the place of an expensive wardrobe.

With respect to attire, Paul first instructs women to dress “in respectable clothing” (ἐν καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ). The noun καταστολή is a NT hapax, though the term occurs in the LXX and in the contemporary literature. It can refer to adornment/clothing (Isa 61:3; Josephus, B.J. 2.126) and demeanor/behavior (Epictetus, Disc. 2.10.15). The subsequent prohibition (forbidding πλέγμα, χρυσίων, μαργαρίτης, ἵματισμός πολυτελής) makes “clothing” the more likely meaning here. Paul uses an uncommon term to describe the Christian woman’s clothing. The adjective κόσμιος, which occurs in the NT only in 1 Timothy (2:9; 3:2), can mean “respectable,” “honorable,” or “appropriate.” Again, the prescription is clarified by the prohibition of v. 9b.

In v. 9b, Paul emphasizes the type of external adornment that is inappropriate: “braided hair and gold or pearls or expensive clothing” (μὴ ἐν πλέγμασι καὶ χρυσίῳ ἤ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἵματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ). The prohibition is best understood as a warning against spending large sums of money to improve the outer appearance and as a warning against seductive attire. This prohibition would be necessary since obsession with

96 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 447, argues that it is quite likely that inappropriate adornment was a disruptive influence in the case of women, just as arguments were in the case of men (2:8).
97 BDAG, s.v. “κοσμέω.” See also the discussion in TLNT, s.v. “κοσμέω.”
98 Peter uses similar language in his household code: ἔνδειξις καὶ περιθέσεως χρυσών ἢ ἐνδύσεως ἵματων κόσμου, ἀλλ’ ὃ κρυπτός τῆς καρδίας ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῷ ἀπάθετῳ τοῦ πραιῶς καὶ ἁπάθει τοῦ πνεύματος ἔστιν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ πολυτελεῖ (1 Pet 3:3-4). But as Hermann Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), 462n107, points out: “We have to do here [in 1 Tim 2:9-15] not with a household rule, but with a liturgical prescription.”
100 BDAG, s.v. “κόσμιος.”
101 Again, Luther’s analysis is helpful: “He condemns those women who parade in luxury, who wish to be dressed in the most beautiful clothing to allure lovers day after
physical beauty was widespread in antiquity. Epictetus, for example, writes: “Immediately after they are fourteen, women are called ‘ladies’ by men. And so when they see that they have nothing else but only to be the bedfellows of men, they begin to beautify themselves, and put all their hopes in that” (Ench. 40). Bruce Winter has demonstrated that there existed a competing set of female social mores in the first-century Greco-Roman world. On the one hand, there was the woman characterized by the cardinal virtue of modesty. On the other hand, there was the “new Roman woman” who mimicked the appearance of the *hetaira*, the high-class prostitute. Such a woman was not characterized by modesty, but by promiscuity. With respect to clothing, the most common form of attire for the modest married woman was the *stola*, a large over-garment that served as a protection from unwanted attentions. The typical attire of the *hetaira* and the “new Roman woman” was so revealing that it was described as “the kind of dress that exposed no greater nakedness by being removed” (Seneca, Helv. 16.5). In addition, gold, pearls, and elaborate hairstyles were the standard accoutrements of promiscuous women. For Juvenal, pearls and expensive jewelry seem to have been an invariable sign of sexual laxity. He writes: “There is nothing that a woman will not permit herself to do, nothing that she deems shameful, when she encircles her neck with green emeralds, and fastens huge pearls to her elongated ears” (Juvenal, Sat. 6.458-459).

Thus, Paul’s warning to women in 1 Tim 2:9 is that extravagant adornment is to be avoided, most likely because it implies the desire to attract attention to oneself, possibly to seduce. The evidence strongly suggests that the woman who fit the description... Paul is speaking out against pomp and excess, *a passion for fashion*” (LW 28:274, emphasis added).


104 Ibid., 99.

105 There exists a large body of Jewish evidence as well. For example, 1 En. 8:1-2: “And Azaz’el taught the people (the art of) making swords and knives, and shields, and breastplates; and he showed to their chosen ones bracelets, decorations, (shadowing of the eye) with antimony, ornamentation, the beautifying of the eyelids, all kinds of precious stones, and all coloring tinctures and alchemy. And there were many wicked ones and they committed adultery and erred, and all their conduct became corrupt.” Also, T. Reu. 5:4-5: “For a woman is not able to coerce a man overtly, but by a harlot’s manner she accomplishes her villainy. Accordingly, my children, flee from sexual promiscuity, and order your wives and your daughters not to adorn their heads and their appearances so as to deceive men’s sound minds.”
of 1 Tim 2:9b sent sexual signals to all who saw her. This would be entirely inappropriate for Christian women, especially Christian women at worship. The instructions in v. 9 could be proactive, but, given the specificity of Paul’s comments, this seems unlikely. More probable is the conclusion that certain women in Ephesus already were dressing this way, and Paul endeavors to bring such behavior to a halt. It is not likely, however, that the opponents were directly responsible for this proclivity for unseemly attire, since they seem to have advocated a celibate life (1 Tim 4:3). Some other influence is at work here. Perhaps certain women in Ephesus had adopted the social mores of the “new Roman woman.”

With the second prepositional phrase of v. 9, and the entirety of v. 10, Paul transitions from the literal to the figurative use of κοσμέω; he carries the discussion from mere outer appearance to attitudes and actions determined by faith. Christian women should be characterized by two qualities in particular. αἰδώς denotes modesty or reverence. The noun is found only here in the NT, and it is used infrequently in the LXX (3 Macc 1:19; 4:5); however, it occurs often in Philo (e.g., Leg. 2.65.2-3; Sacr. 27.4; Virt. 195.7), Josephus (e.g., Ant. 5.182.5; 7.209.3; B.J. 2.496.4; 3.153.2), and others. Since here in 1 Tim 2:9 the term is paired with σωφροσύνη, it is probably best translated as “modesty.”

106 With Moo, “What Does It Mean to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2.11-15,” 182; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 71; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 135; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 449; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 95; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 205–206. Another option is presented by Gary G. Hoag, “The Teaching on Riches in 1 Timothy in Light of Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus” (PhD, University of Bristol and Trinity College, 2013), 75-109, especially 87–96. Hoag argues that 1 Tim 2:9-10 is a call for wealthy women to stop following the social expectations to honor Artemis. He suggests the term πλέγμα may refer to abstaining from wearing one’s hair like the goddess. Additionally, he suggests that while the “new Roman woman” may partially be in view in vv. 9-10, the call to avoid ἰματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ also points to the practice of dressing to imitate and serve Artemis. In my view, a number of Hoag’s suggestions concerning the false teachers are inconsistent with the evidence of 1 Timothy. See my critique of his work in chapter four, section three.

107 BDAG, s.v. “αἰδώς.”

108 For additional references, see TLNT, s.v. “αἰδώς.”

The σώφρων (“self-controlled”)\(^{110}\) word-group is strongly represented in the PD.\(^{111}\) The word-group had a fundamental role in Hellenistic and earlier Greek thought,\(^{112}\) but the determinative place of the Christ event for the possibility of σωφροσύνη sets Paul apart from his Hellenistic contemporaries.\(^{113}\) In Titus 2:11-12, for example, Paul declares that the path to this sort of living has been opened up by the appearance of Christ, because of the conversational and pedagogical nature of the incarnation: “For the grace of God has appeared (ἐπιφανές), bringing salvation for all people, training (παιδεύω) us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled (σωφρόνως), upright, and godly lives in the present age.” Marshall suggests that the word-group denotes “a suitable restraint in every respect, a self-control which leads to behaviour appropriate to the situation.”\(^{114}\) Spicq captures the essence of αἰδώς-σωφροσύνη; the combination refers to the “sentiment de retenue et de modestie qui l'empêche de dépasser la mesure: la discretion.”\(^{115}\) Evidently, for at least some Christian women in Ephesus, there existed a need for discretion specifically in the doxological context.

Paul concludes the discussion of appropriate adornment in v. 10. ἀλλά introduces the contrast to the external adornment rejected in v. 9b. The adversative plus the relative clause (ἀλλὰ δὲ πρέπει) assumes the repetition of κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς and should be read: “but adorn themselves with that which is fitting.” The verb πρέπω (undisputed: 1 Cor 11:13; disputed: Eph 5:3; 1 Tim 2:10; Titus 2:1) refers to what is “suitable” or “appropriate” for

\(^{110}\) BDAG, s.v. “σώφρων.”

\(^{111}\) The adjective σώφρων appears in 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; 2:2, 5. The verbs σωφρονέω and σωφρονίζω occur in Titus 2:6 and in Titus 2:4 respectively. The adverb σωφρόνως occurs in Titus 2:12. The noun σωφρονισμός is found in 2 Tim 1:7, and the form found here in 1 Tim 2:9 is repeated in 1 Tim 2:15 (σωφροσύνη).

\(^{112}\) Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 183, points out that, though the word is very common in Hellenistic Greek, it has no Hebrew equivalent; therefore, it is relatively rare in the LXX.


\(^{114}\) Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 184, emphasis added. This “suitable restraint” is not gender specific (1 Tim 2:9); it is a virtue of Timothy himself (2 Tim 1:7), and it is a necessary quality of elders (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8) and young men (Titus 2:6). Thus, in the PD, the new life in Christ is one that is characterized by self-control, prudence, and moderation, that is, it is a way of living that is respectable in the eyes of the world. With Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 161.

\(^{115}\) Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 1:376.
a particular person or group. The group in view here is “women who profess godliness” (γυναιξιν ἐπαγγέλλομεναι θεοσέβειαιν). The verb ἐπαγγέλλομαι is used of the opponents in 1 Tim 6:21: “for by professing (ἐπαγγέλλομαι) [what is falsely called ‘knowledge’] some have swerved from the faith.” The Christian women in 1 Tim 2:10, however, have professed “godliness” (θεοσέβεια). Curiously, Paul replaces εὐσέβεια with the cognate θεοσέβεια. Though the term is fairly common in the LXX (Gen 20:11; 4 Macc 7:6, 22; 17:15; Job 28:28; Sir 1:24; Bar 5:4) and in the contemporary and later literature (e.g., Philo, Opif. 154; Heir 60; Congr. 130; Clement of Alexandria, Protr. 1.3-4; 4.58; 6.70), this is the only occurrence of θεοσέβεια in the NT. θεοσέβεια translates “fear of God” (Ψεβήθεις) in Gen 20:11 and “fear of the Lord” (γὰρ σεβάσθης) in Job 28:28, so the word is roughly equivalent to εὐσέβεια. In the PD, both terms are used to refer to the ongoing translation of the apostolic gospel into appropriate behavior. The final phrase of v. 10 defines the “appropriate” (πρέπω) adornment of godly women as “good works” (ἔργων ἀγαθῶν). For Paul, the wardrobe of the Christian woman consists of the actions that flow from genuine faith in Christ.

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116 BDAG, s.v. “πρέπω.”
117 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 451, says that εὐσέβεια and θεοσέβεια both refer to the combination of knowledge of God and behavior that grows out of that knowledge. See also Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 220.
118 See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:2b-3 in the previous chapter. Perhaps Paul transitions to θεοσέβεια because in his mind the term better fits the gender specific context. εὐσέβεια occurs in the context of mixed company or when Timothy is especially in view (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1). This is the clearest difference between this passage and the other passages where the idea of “godliness” surfaces. Another option is that Paul thought the extra specificity (θεοσέβεια) appropriate for the worship context, though, notably, he does not use θεοσέβεια in 1 Tim 2:2. Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 137, suggests that a possible reason for the change to θεοσέβεια is to stress the ethical dimension, but I have already demonstrated that the ethical dimension is strong in εὐσέβεια, so this suggestion should be rejected. As a second option, Knight suggests that this is a term used by the opponents. This, too, is very unlikely. Where the opponents are most closely associated with “godliness,” εὐσέβεια is used (νομιζόντων πορισμόν εἶναι τὴν εὐσέβειαν, 1 Tim 6:5). Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 451, claims that θεοσέβεια was a term “used of Jews and of women.” See also Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 210, who suggests that the term may correspond to the reference to women.
119 διά is instrumental here, so the phrase δι’ ἔργων ἀγαθῶν may be translated literally as “by means of good works.” Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 134, argues that the plural formulation indicates a post-Pauline development: “Denn Paulus vermeidet konsequent diese Redeweise, um statt dessen für das sittliche Tun der Christen das
B. Women Are to Participate Peaceably in Worship, and This Excludes the Function of Teaching (vv. 11-12)

1. Christian Women Are Responsible to Learn Quietly (v. 11)

Having discussed proper adornment for Christian women at worship, Paul now outlines female participation in worship. He provides a positive injunction in v. 11, and he places restrictions on women in v. 12. First, Paul declares: “let a woman learn.” The switch from the plural (γυναῖκες, v. 9) to the generic singular (γυνή, v. 11) is natural and the corporate worship context indicates that all Christian women, rather than wives in particular, are still in view. “Learning” (μαθαίνω) is a major theme in the PD (1 Tim 5:4, 13; 2 Tim 3:7, 14; Titus 3:14). In both letters to Timothy the verb μαθαίνω appears in contexts that deal with women. The “weak women” of 2 Tim 3:6-7 are described as those who are “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth” (πάντοτε μαθαίνοντα καὶ μηδέποτε εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἔλθειν δυνάμενα). By using the third-person imperative (μαθαίνετω) here in 1 Tim 2:11, Paul is not giving his reluctant permission to women who want to learn; rather, the third-person imperative should be understood as a command (see also μαθαίνετωσαν in 1 Tim 5:4:), and the present tense indicates an ongoing process. Christian women, those who have come to the knowledge of the truth, are commanded to grow in their understanding of the objective content of the faith. The verb μαθαίνω envisages Christian doctrine taught in the congregational setting. In 1 Timothy, the delegate and the “elders” (ἐπίσκοπος/πρεσβύτερος) appear to be
the ones primarily responsible for the proclamation of doctrine. Elders must be “skillful in teaching” (διδακτικός, 1 Tim 3:2). Moreover, elders are referred to as those who “labor in preaching and teaching” (μάλιστα οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ, 1 Tim 5:17). Instruction was a vital part of the corporate meeting (e.g., 1 Tim 4:13), and all believers in attendance, except the elder(s) teaching, would have been in the position of a learner. Here, Paul clearly indicates that women were neither excused nor barred from learning.

Paul’s chief concern in v. 11, however, is not that Christian women learn, but how they learn. Two prepositional phrases qualify the command. Paul first explains that women are to learn “with a peaceable posture” (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ). The noun ἡσυχία can denote complete silence or a quiet demeanor, but the latter is the more likely meaning here.

For the argument that ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος denote the same office in the PD, see Merkle, The Elder and Overseer, 135–157. While we do find a three-tiered ecclesiastical system in place by the time of Ignatius—“I urge you to hasten to do all things in the harmony of God, with the bishop (τοῦ ἐπισκόπου) presiding in the place of God and the presbyters (πρεσβυτέρων) in the place of the council of the apostles, and the deacons (διακόνων), who are especially dear to me, entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ” (Ign. Magn. 6)—we find only two offices (with the exception of Timothy himself) in 1 Timothy—“elders” (ἐπίσκοπος/πρεσβύτερος) and “deacons” (διακόνος). Though some argue for one “overseer” (ἐπίσκοπος, 1 Tim 3:1) and a plurality of “elders” (πρεσβύτεροι, 1 Tim 5:17), it is unlikely that two separate offices are in view here. The singular form in 1 Tim 3:1 is probably a generic singular, which is a continuation of the pattern established in 2:9–15. Also, if the ἐπίσκοπος and the πρεσβύτερος are two separate offices, it is strange that Paul only provides qualifications for the ἐπίσκοπος (3:1–7). Perhaps Paul uses two terms for one office because he wants to emphasize both dignity and duty: πρεσβύτερος is more a description of character; ἐπίσκοπος is more a description of function. Finally, I conclude with Merkle that every elder was to possess and exercise teaching abilities. See the note on Skeat’s work below.

BDAG, s.v. “διδακτικός.”

T.C. Skeat, “Especially the Parchments”: A Note on 2 Timothy IV.13,” JTS 30 (1979): 173–177, has argued persuasively that μάλιστα in the PD means something like “that is to say.” Thus, no distinction is made in 1 Tim 5:17 between “ruling elders” and “teaching elders.” The better translation would be: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, that is, those who labor in preaching and teaching.” See also the discussion in Merkle, The Elder and Overseer, 154–156.

With Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 452.

Several commentators have rightly pointed out that the contrast often drawn between women in Judaism and women in Christianity has been significantly overplayed. Paul is not here inaugurating a new era for women by telling them to learn. See, for example, Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 72; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 452–453; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 213–214.

BDAG, s.v. “ἡσυχία.”
Outside this pericope, ἡσυχία occurs only one other time in the Pauline letters. In 2 Thess 3:12, Paul urges idle brothers to “do their work quietly (ἡσυχία) and earn their own living.” Surely this refers to a peaceable posture in the workplace, rather than to complete silence.\(^{130}\) The only other NT occurrence is in Acts 22:2: when the people heard Paul speaking in Hebrew “they became more quiet” (μᾶλλον παρέσχον ἡσυχίαν). The term is found twelve times in the LXX (Josh 5:8; 1 Chr 4:40; 22:9; 1 Macc 9:58; 2 Macc 12:2; 14:4; Prov 7:9; 11:12; Job 34:29; Sir 28:16; Ezek 38:11), and only twice does it seem to denote complete silence (Job 34:29; Prov 11:12). The related term, ἡσύχιος, which is found in the immediately preceding pericope, refers to the peaceable existence of the Christian in the world (1 Tim 2:2; see also 1 Pet 3:4).\(^{131}\) Thus, the evidence favors the meaning “peaceable” in 1 Tim 2:11.\(^{132}\) Women are to learn without doing anything to distract from or interrupt the instruction of the elder(s).\(^{133}\)

Additionally, women are to learn “with all submissiveness” (ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ). The noun ὑποταγή occurs four times in the Pauline letters (undisputed: 2 Cor 9:13; Gal 2:5; disputed: 1 Tim 2:11; 3:4). In 1 Tim 3:4, elders are told that they must manage their households well, which includes keeping their children in submission (τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ). The noun refers to humble and respectful compliance.\(^{134}\) πᾶς functions here as...

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\(^{130}\) With Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 199.

\(^{131}\) BDAG, s.v. “ἡσύχιος.”

\(^{132}\) With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 72; Witherington, Women in the Earlier Churches, 120; Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus, 129; Keener, Paul, Women & Wives, 108; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 453; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 222; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 118–119; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 214–215; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 98. Contra Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 139, who claims that silence is a concrete expression of submission; Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 226, who states: “Given the centrality of teaching in the passage and women’s explicit prohibition from teaching, it is hard to imagine that the exhortation to ἡσυχία would not imply silence.”

\(^{133}\) Paul probably is not “[cutting] off all occasion of conversation” (Chrysostom, Hom. 1 Tim 2:11-15). Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 453, captures the point: “In the present context listening quietly with deference and attentiveness to the one teaching is indicated. Other forms of utterance (praying, singing, prophesying, encouraging) are not ruled out; the limited reference here is to speaking out of turn and thereby interrupting the lesson.”

\(^{134}\) With Moo, “What Does It Mean to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2.11-15,” 183; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 139; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 454; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 200–201; Schreiner,
Christian women are to be characterized by compliance of the utmost sort. But to what or to whom is this deference due? The concept of submission (ὑποτάσσω) often surfaces in the household codes, where wives are told to submit to their own husbands (Eph 5:24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1). However, the worship context clarifies that the subjection spoken of here is to Christian teachers. No neat distinction can be made between the teacher and the teaching. Presumably, Paul has in mind elders who are “able to give instruction in the healthy teaching” (Titus 1:9). He elsewhere establishes the fact that the Christian community is not to contemplate, much less submit to, false teaching. Therefore, v. 11 calls for Christian women to be quiet and attentive learners, to accept the authority of the teacher, and to embrace the healthy teaching of Christ.

2. Christian Women Are Not Tasked with the Proclamation of Doctrine (v. 12)

Paul follows the positive command of v. 11 with a two-part prohibition. First Timothy 2:12 may be translated: “but I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but she is to be peaceable.” The verb ἐπιτρέπω is rare in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: 1 Cor 14:34; 16:7; disputed: 1 Tim 2:12), though it occurs over fifteen times in the NT. The term means “to allow,” and Paul uses it in a parallel context in 1 Cor 14:34: “women in the churches… are not permitted to speak” (οὐ γὰρ


135 BDAG, s.v. “πᾶς.”
136 Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 99. See also Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 47: “women should subordinate themselves to what the men in the congregation teach.”
137 See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:20-21 in the previous chapter.
138 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 216.
139 On the relationship between 1 Tim 2:11-15 and 1 Cor 14:34-35, see Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 439-440. Marshall presents three options: 1) 1 Cor 14:34-35 is an interpolation based on 1 Tim 2:11-15, 2) 1 Cor 14:34-35 is authentic and earlier, while the differences in 1 Tim 2:11-15 show it to be later Paulustradition, and 3) there is no direct literary relationship between the two passages. Following E.E. Ellis, “The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor 14.34-35),” in New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis, ed. E.J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 213–220, Marshall rightly concludes that the third option is the most defensible: “The similar features of the passages, alongside the differences, point to a tradition lying behind each of the passages which has been applied in different ways” (440).
140 BDAG, s.v. “ἐπιτρέπω.”
The first-person present indicative form of the verb does not refer invariably to temporary restrictions, nor does ἐπιτρέπω merely indicate a personal preference, thereby signaling some sort of deuto-authoritative claim.142 Paul uses ἐπιτρέπω in 1 Cor 16:7 with God as the subject, so the force of the verb can hardly be weakened to preference. The prohibition—“I do not allow a woman”—is completed by two infinitives: διδάσκειν and αὐθεντεῖν. Both terms require significant attention, but the second is especially difficult to interpret.

In the PD, the verb διδάσκω (1 Tim 2:12; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:11) denotes the authoritative proclamation of Christian doctrine, which usually takes place in the congregational setting.143 The verb is paired with παραγγέλλω (“to give orders”)144 in 1 Tim 4:11, and it is coupled with παρακαλέω (“to urge strongly”)145 in 1 Tim 6:2, which suggests that “teaching” is done by one in a position of authority. In 2 Tim 2:2, Paul tells Timothy to transmit the body of apostolic doctrine to faithful people (πιστοὶ ἀνθρώποι), so that they “will be able to teach others also” (οἵτινες ἔσονται καὶ ἐτέρους διδάξαι).

It is clear, then, that “teaching” refers to the passing on of content that is specifically

141 For a full discussion of the similarities between 1 Tim 2:12 and 1 Cor 14:34, see Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 344-346.
142 With Moo, “1 Tim 2:11-15,” 65; “What Does It Mean to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2.11-15,” 184–185; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 454–455; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 121–122; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 99–101; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 216–217; Schlarb, Die gesunde Lehre, 276n3, who points out: “Das ἐπιτρέπω korrespondiert mit dem βούλεω in V. 8.” Contra Padgett, “Wealthy Women at Ephesus,” 24; Payne, “Libertarian Women in Ephesus,” 171–172, who claims that Paul more than any other NT writer distinguished his personal advice from permanently authoritative instruction from the Lord. Payne adds, “When Paul was giving his own personal advice he typically used first person singular present active indicative verb forms… exactly the form of ἐπιτρέπω in 1 Tim 2:12.” Payne offers 1 Cor 7:10, 12 as examples of Paul making a distinction between opinion and authoritative teaching. It seems more likely, however, that in 1 Cor 7 Paul is differentiating between his own apostolic (and, therefore, authoritative) pronouncements and sayings of the Lord. In other words, Paul is in v. 10 citing a tradition and he is in v. 12 affirming that the tradition is silent on the matter. For discussion of this point, see Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 519-526.
143 Similarly, Moo, “1 Tim 2:11-15,” 66; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 71–72; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 140–141; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 455; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 201; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 101–102; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 217; Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 61.
144 BDAG, s.v. “παραγγέλλω.”
145 BDAG, s.v. “παρακαλέω.”
Christ-centered. Here in 1 Tim 2:12, the object of διδάσκειν, ἀνδρός, reminds readers that the gathered church (men and women) is the context for the prohibition. Thus, it is *formal instruction in the faith, as the Christian community gathers for worship*, that is prohibited here in 1 Tim 2:12. The male elders in Ephesus are to be tasked with this sort of “teaching” (1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17).

The second infinitive, αὐθεντεῖν, has been the subject of an unremitting debate in biblical scholarship. The verb occurs only here in the NT. It is not used in the LXX, nor does it occur in the Apostolic Fathers. While studies of usage in the wider literature have yielded imaginative suggestions of meaning, interpreters seem to have reached a general consensus: “The root meaning involves the concept of authority.” The issue

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146 ἀνδρός is the object of both complementary infinitives in v. 12. Like γυνή, ἀνδρός is used generically.

147 Interpreted this way, the prohibition does not necessarily infringe on Paul’s affirmations concerning women (e.g., women should pray and prophesy, 1 Cor 11:5; women should teach other women, Titus 2:3). Additionally, Schreiner, *Romans*, 786-799, concludes that the vibrant ministry of women such as Phoebe (Rom 16:1), Prisca (Rom 16:3), and Junia (Rom 16:7) do not contradict the admonitions delivered here in 1 Tim 2:11-12 because none of these women listed in Romans functioned as the leader of a congregation (ἐπίσκοπος/πρεσβύτερος). Phoebe was a deacon (διάκονος), which is consistent with 1 Tim 3:11 (where women are identified as deacons). Junia, who is referred to as a “messenger” or “apostle” (ἀπόστολος), was an itinerant evangelist or a missionary. Prisca was probably the same. Compare Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 942-948, 955-964. Although Jewett basically concurs with respect to Junia, he argues that Phoebe was the leader of the congregation in Kenchreia, and he suggests that Prisca functioned, among other things, as a theological teacher.

148 See, for example, Kroeger and Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 87–104: “I do not permit a woman to teach nor to represent herself as originator of man” (103). See also Andrew C. Perriman, “What Eve Did, What Women Shouldn’t Do: The Meaning of ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in 1 Timothy 2:12,” *TynBul* 44 (1993): 129–142. Perriman argues that two closely related meanings mark out the usage of the verb αὐθεντέω at the time of Paul. The first is the more specific meaning of perpetrating a crime. The second is the more general meaning of actively wielding influence, which possibly shades into the passive idea of having authority, though, for Perriman, the passive idea “appears to be a later development” (138).

that remains unresolved is whether ἀὐθεντέω carries connotations of a negative and overbearing rule (e.g., “to domineer”) or whether the term refers in a neutral or positive way to the exercising of authority (e.g., “to have authority”). Henry Scott Baldwin has formulated a methodology that distinguishes the verbal forms from the nominal and the adjectival forms of the word and that sifts the data by both genre and date. Baldwin analyzes eighty-five occurrences of ἀὐθεντέω and demonstrates that the semantic range of the verb includes four primary meanings. First, the verb can mean “to rule or to reign sovereignly.” Second, ἀὐθεντέω can mean “to control or to dominate.” Baldwin suggests that there are subtle differences within this second category: a) “to influence,” b) “to have legal standing,” c) “to domineer,” and d) “to grant authorization.” Third, the term sometimes means “to act independently.” Again, there are nuances within the category: a) “to assume authority over,” b) “to exercise one’s own jurisdiction,” and c) “to flout authority.” Finally, ἀὐθεντέω can mean “to be responsible for or to instigate something.” Baldwin concludes that the context of 1 Tim 2 narrows the choice to meanings two and three. Thus, we are left with translations in the orbit of “to influence/to have authority” (with positive connotations) or “to assume authority over” (with negative connotations).

In my view, the deciding factor is the syntactical construction of v. 12: negated finite verb + infinitive + οὐ + infinitive. Whether this construction is used to link two closely related ideas or to join two expressions to convey a single idea (hendiadys), and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 47; Moo, “1 Tim 2:11-15,” 68; Witherington, Women in the Earlier Churches, 122; Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, 87; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 141; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 456–458; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 126; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 200–201; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 201; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 220; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 66.

151 See the chart and subsequent discussion in Baldwin, “An Important Word,” 45-49.
152 Ibid., 51. Baldwin finds meanings 2a and 3c the most likely options. He notes that, if a negative meaning were intended, meaning 3c could be possible, although he points out that there are “no instances of a pejorative use of the verb before the fourth century AD” (49).
the conjunction ὥστε coordinates actions of the same order, that is, actions that are both viewed either negatively or positively by the writer or speaker.\textsuperscript{155} Marshall and others argue that, because the deception of Eve (v. 14) appears to be cited in parallel to the act of teaching (v. 12), διδάσκω should be understood negatively here ("false teaching by some women").\textsuperscript{156} While this is a possibility, it does not seem to be the most probable interpretation of the verb διδάσκω. Andreas Köstenberger has pointed out that Paul uses the verb ἕτεροδιδασκαλέω in 1 Timothy when he writes of the teaching of the opponents.\textsuperscript{157} Marshall has retorted: "[Köstenberger’s] comment that, if the writer had meant to refer to false teaching by the women, he would have used ἕτεροδιδασκαλεῖν rather than διδάσκειν overlooks the fact that to say ‘But I do not permit women to give false teaching’ (!) in this context would imply ‘But I do allow men to do so;’ in short, ἕτεροδιδασκαλεῖν would be an inappropriate choice of word."\textsuperscript{158} But Köstenberger’s general point is still valid; every occurrence of the verb διδάσκω in the PD is positive (1 Tim 2:12; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim 2:2; see also Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 4:17; Eph 4:21; Col 1:28; 2:7; 3:16; 2 Thess 2:15), with the one exception of Titus 1:11, in which διδάσκω does not stand alone. In the Titus text, Paul makes explicit the fact that false teaching is in view (διδάσκοντες ἃ μὴ δεῖ, “teaching what ought not be taught”). But Paul provides no such indicator in 1 Tim 2:12. He could have done this in a wide range of examples. For example, he could have clarified that only the women who have “strayed after Satan” (ἐξετράπησαν ὅπλω τοῦ σατανᾶ, 1 Tim 5:15) are prohibited from teaching. But, in fact, Paul does not say this or anything like it. Because of this, διδάσκω probably should be understood positively in v. 12. This necessitates a positive reading of the second infinitive. Hence, αὐθεντέω here means “to influence/to have authority.”\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{155} See Köstenberger, “A Complex Sentence,” 57, for a list of over fifty ὥστε constructions in the NT.

\textsuperscript{156} Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 458.

\textsuperscript{157} Köstenberger, “A Complex Sentence,” 62.

\textsuperscript{158} Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 458n157. Marshall responded to the first edition of Köstenberger’s aforementioned work, which was published in 1995.

\textsuperscript{159} With Knight, “ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in Reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2.12,” 143–157; Moo, “What Does It Mean to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2.11-15,” 186–187; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 128–130; Köstenberger, “A Complex Sentence,” 62; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 104. A number of commentators claim that Paul’s use of the unusual term αὐθεντέω signals an unusual situation in Ephesus, one that involved women usurping authority. See, for example, Fee,
What does the prohibition of v. 12 tell us about the opponents in Ephesus? Some scholars have argued that women held a prominent place in the circle of the opponents. Gritz suggests that the opponents targeted women. Alan Padgett contends that the opponents had gained a great following of wealthy women, and it is these women in particular who are prohibited from teaching and exercising authority. The reference in v. 9 to gold, pearls, and costly apparel does indicate that there were at least some wealthy women in Ephesus. Anticipating the discussion of 1 Tim 5:13-15 and 2 Tim 3:6-7, I can also suggest that the opponents had considerable success in deceiving/recruiting some women, though this does not necessarily mean that there was a widespread problem of female false teachers in Ephesus. A final assessment of the role of women in the opponents’ circle must await further exegetical analysis. At this stage, we can say only that Paul’s prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12 does not seem to be limited to women who were teaching the false doctrine of the opponents. As I hope to have demonstrated, this would require an irregular use of the verb διδάσκω. Additionally, in vv. 11-12 Paul uses the generic singular, γυνή, which suggests that all women in the Pauline community in Ephesus are in view. It could be that Paul prohibits all women from teaching because so many women had strayed after the false teaching, though this option requires what I consider to be a less likely reading of v. 13 (discussed below).

C. Women Are Not Allowed to Teach in Worship because of the Order of Creation, and the Subverting of the Order Leads to Transgression (vv. 13-14)

1. Adam Was Created First (v. 13)

1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 73; Witherington, Women in the Earlier Churches, 121; Keener, Paul, Women & Wives, 109; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 458; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 221–223. Towner asserts that ἐξουσιάζω is the standard verb in Pauline discussions of authority, but ἐξουσιάζω occurs in only two verses of the Pauline corpus (1 Cor 6:12; 7:4).

160 Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus, 111–112, explains: “The active religious ambience of the city of Ephesus as well as the participation of non-Christian women in the pagan cults promoted or intensified the spiritual longings of all women dwelling in the metropolis. The less-than-satisfying social position of women in Greco-Roman society also contributed to the feminine susceptibility. The seclusion of many women as well as their little if any education would foster credulity on their part… [Women] would be flattered and delighted by the attention of ‘spiritual leaders.’”


162 Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 179–195, concludes that some women were adherents of the opponents contested by the Pastorals. But, she argues, the suggestion that women were teaching different doctrine stands on less certain ground.
In vv. 13-14, Paul turns to the early chapters of Genesis. But why does he do so? The coordinative conjunction (γάρ) could be classified as causal; Paul is providing the basis or ground for the restrictions he has just placed on women ("because"). Another option is to classify the γάρ as explanatory; Paul is using an example to clarify the prohibition of v. 12 ("you see..."). Paul uses γάρ thirty-three times in the PD. He employs the conjunction thirteen times in 1 Timothy (2:5, 13; 3:13; 4:5, 8, 10, 16; 5:4, 11, 15, 18; 6:7, 10), and in seven of these instances γάρ is immediately preceded by an imperative (2:12-13; 3:12-13; 4:7-8, 16; 5:4, 11, 17-18). In all six imperative-γάρ combinations outside of 1 Tim 2:9-15, the conjunction is causal.

1 Tim 3:12-13

διάκονοι ἐστωσαν μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρες, τέκνων καλῶς προϊστάμενοι καὶ τῶν ἵδιων ὀφειν. οἱ γάρ καλῶς διαχονήσαντες βαβυλόν ἐσυντός καλῶν περιποιοῦνται καὶ πολλὴν παρρησίαν ἐν πίστει τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Let men who are deacons be one-woman men, leading their children and houses well; because those who serve well secure for themselves a good standing, and much boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

1 Tim 4:7-8

τοὺς δὲ βεβήλους καὶ γραώδεις μόνους παραιτοῦ. Γυναικεῖς δὲ σεαυτὸν πρὸς εὐσέβειαν· η γάρ σωματική γυμνασία πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὕφελμος, ή δὲ εὐσέβεια πρὸς πάντα ὕφελμος ἐστὶν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔχουσα ζωῆς τῆς νῦν καὶ τῆς μελλούσης. And dismiss the profane and speculative stories. But train yourself for godliness, because, while bodily training is beneficial in a limited way, godliness is beneficial in every way, holding promise for the present life and for the future.

1 Tim 4:16

ἐπεξε σεαυτῷ καὶ τῇ διασκαλίᾳ, ἐπίμενε αὐτῷ· τοῦτο γάρ ποιῶν καὶ σεαυτὸν σώσεις καὶ τοὺς ἀκούοντάς σου.

163 On Paul’s interaction with the creation account in 1 Cor 11 and in 1 Tim 2, see Benjamin L. Merkle, “Paul’s Arguments from Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14: An Apparent Inconsistency Answered,” JETS 49 (2006): 527–548. Merkle concludes that in 1 Corinthians Paul only indirectly uses the creation account, while in 1 Timothy the argument from creation applies directly to Paul’s prohibition.

164 See, for example, Moo, “The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” 202–203; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 142; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 130; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 201; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 150.

Pay close attention to yourself and the teaching; continue in this, because by doing so you will save both yourself and the ones listening to you.

1 Tim 5:4
εἰ δὲ τις χάρα τέκνα ἢ ἐκγονα ἔχει, μανθανέτωσαν πρῶτον τὸν ἱδίον ὅικον εὐσεβείν καὶ ἀμοιβὰς ἀποδίδοναι τοῖς προγόνοις· τότε γὰρ ἐστιν ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.
But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own house and to pay back their parents, because this is acceptable before God.

1 Tim 5:11
νεωτέρας δὲ χήρας παραιτοῦ· δὴν γὰρ καταστρηνάσωσιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, γαμεῖν ἑλουσιν
But refuse to enroll younger widows, because when their desires lead them away from Christ, they desire to marry…

1 Tim 5:17-18
Οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες προεβότεροι διπλῆς τιμῆς ἀξιούσθωσαν, μάλιστα οἱ κοσμότες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ δίδασκαλίᾳ. λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή· βοῶν ἀλοώτα οὐ φιμάσσεις, καὶ· ἀξιός ὁ ἐφιγάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ.
Let the elders who direct well be counted worthy of double compensation, that is, those who exert themselves in the Word and teaching. Because the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing,” and, “The worker is worthy of his wage.”

We may say, then, that Paul’s pattern in 1 Timothy is to issue a command and immediately provide the reason for the command. This makes it likely, though not certain, that the γὰρ in 1 Tim 2:13 is causal.

The reason for the two-fold prohibition found in v. 12 is: “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὕα). The clear emphasis on temporal priority (πρῶτος… εἶτα) suggests that Paul is alluding to Gen 2. In the LXX, the name “Adam” (Ἄδαμ) first occurs in Gen 2:16, but the name “Eve” (Εὕα) does not occur until Gen 4:1. However, Paul names both the man and the woman here. The undisputed Paul refers to Adam on three occasions (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22, 45), and he mentions Eve in 2 Cor 11:3. Paul only uses the verb πλάσσω (“to form” or “to mold”) when he is quoting or alluding to the OT. In Rom 9:20, he quotes Isa 29:16 LXX verbatim: “But who are you,

\footnote{166}Moo, “The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” 202–203, finds over twenty occasions in the PD where an imperatival verb or idea followed by γὰρ indicates movement from command to reason. \footnote{167}Compare Scholer, “1 Timothy 2.9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church’s Ministry,” 111–115. \footnote{168}BDAG, s.v. “πλάσσω.”
O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder (μὴ ἐρεῖ τὸ πλάσμα τῷ πλάσαντι), ‘Why have you made me like this?’” Paul’s precise statement in 1 Tim 2:13 does not occur in the LXX, though the verb πλάσσω is used in the creation account (Gen 2:7, 15, 19). Interestingly, in the LXX, the verb is never used of the woman. But the structure of Paul’s statement indicates that he understands Adam and Eve to be equal in that both were “formed” by God (see also 2 Macc 7:23; Josephus, Ant. 1.32; 1 Clem. 33:4). 169 This point will be important for our discussion of v. 14 below. There is no explicit reference here to the fact that the woman is derived from the man (compare 1 Cor 11:8). 170 Rather, the emphasis is on the fact that the man was created before the woman. 171 Since I have argued that v. 13 likely provides the reason for the restrictions contained in v. 12, the most probable interpretation of v. 13 is that, for Paul, Adam’s precedence places upon him spiritual responsibility. 172 Paul’s logic appears to be: the man (Adam) was formed first, which indicates authority and responsibility; therefore, it is the men (in Ephesus) who are tasked with the teaching of the faith in the congregational setting. It cannot be argued, however, that Paul’s ecclesiological motto was: “any man will do.” Elsewhere Paul outlines qualifications for elders (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) and urges Timothy to entrust the Christ-centered teaching to faithful people (2 Tim 2:2). 173

2. Eve Was Deceived (v. 14)

First Timothy 2:14 begins with an explanatory καί. Having provided the reason for the restrictions placed on the women in Ephesus (γάρ, v. 13), Paul now reminds the believers in Ephesus of the dangers associated with the subverting of the order of creation

169 Tamez, Struggles for Power in Early Christianity, 41.
170 Though Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 143, claims that it is not mere chronology that Paul appeals to here, but what is entailed in the chronology.
171 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 226: “The nerve of the argument here is that not only did God freely create both but he chose to create them in the order noted.”
172 Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus, 137, rightly argues: “The entire account, Gen. 2:18-25, does not indicate man’s superiority. Instead it reveals man’s need for the woman, her equality with the man (‘fit for him,’ ‘bone of my bone’), and the man’s responsibility toward the woman (‘cleave to his wife’). Adam’s precedence places upon him responsibility more than anything else.”
173 Mounce and Schreiner reach similar conclusions and sufficiently discuss the alternative interpretations of v. 13. See Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 134–135; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 105–111.
Here, Paul names only the man (Ἀδὰμ), and he refers to Eve as “the woman” (ἡ γυνὴ). Additionally, he uses a different verb for each of them: while Adam was not “deceived” (ἀπατάω), the woman was “deceived” (ἐξαπατάω).

Neither of the verbs Paul uses here is common, but ἀπατάω is the most rare. It is found in the NT only here, in Eph 5:6, and in Jas 1:26. ἐξαπατάω occurs six times in the NT (undisputed: Rom 7:11; 16:18; 1 Cor 3:18; 2 Cor 11:3; disputed: 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 2:14). The terms are synonymous—both mean “to mislead” or “to cause someone to accept false ideas.”

In Gen 3:13 LXX, ἀπατάω refers to the serpent’s deception of Eve: “‘And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me and I ate’” (καὶ ἔφαγεν ἡ γυνὴ ὁ ὄφις ἡπάτησέν με, καὶ ἔφαγεν). In the two passages where Paul refers to the deception of Eve, he uses the verb ἐξαπατάω (2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14). This is probably insignificant, however. In both cases, Paul retells part of the biblical narrative, but he provides no indication that he is quoting Genesis. In 1 Tim 5:18, when Paul quotes Deut 25:4 LXX, he supplies the introductory formula: “for the Scripture says” (λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή).

Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 144, is correct in suggesting that in v. 14 Paul shows by negative example the importance of heeding the respective roles established by God in creation. Another syntactical option is to take v. 14 as the second reason for the restrictions given in v. 12. For a discussion of this view, see Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 136-142.

The alternative reading, ἀπατήθεισα (א2 D1 K L etc.), should be rejected; the compound ἐξαπατηθείσα has better manuscript support (א* A D* F G P etc.). Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 443, following Elliott, The Greek Text of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, 44, claims that the variant is perhaps due to scribes' dislike of compounds.

BDAG, s.v. “ἀπατάω”; BDAG, s.v. “ἐξαπατάω.” Hanson, The Pastoral Epistles, 65–77, argues that the author of 1 Timothy reflects the tradition that the serpent sexually seduced Eve. This argument is unconvincing. As noted above, Paul uses ἐξαπατάω a number of times in his letters. The term always refers to the deception of the mind or heart (as a metonymy of subject). Second Corinthians 11:3, the only other Pauline reference to Eve's deception, is particularly telling. First, the entire Christian community in Corinth is in view (2 Cor 11:1-2); it is highly unlikely that Paul is concerned about every believer in Corinth being sexually seduced. Second, Paul clearly states that his concern is for the thoughts of the believers: “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts (τὰ νοήματα) will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” The reference in 2 Cor 11:3 is to mental deception, not sexual seduction. This is also the case in 1 Tim 2:14. See also Witherington, Women in the Earlier Churches, 123; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 461; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 113.

Richard N. Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975, 1999), 91–98, has demonstrated that introductory formulae are associated with the vast majority of Paul's biblical quotations. See also B.
formula in 1 Tim 2:13-14. Most probably, then, we should not think of Paul intentionally replacing the verb ἀπατάω (Gen 3:13 LXX) with the verb ἐξαπατάω (2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14). It is more likely that Paul retells from memory the Genesis narrative, and he uses ἐξαπατάω simply because he prefers this term. Of course, here in 1 Tim 2:14 Paul uses both terms: ἀπατάω and ἐξαπατάω. Perhaps he uses two words with the same meaning rather than using the same word twice in order to draw an even clearer line between Adam and Eve. The verse is contrastive in nature (δὲ), so this seems to be the best conclusion.

ἐξαπατάω occurs here as an adverbial participle, either of means (“by being deceived”) or of cause (“because she was deceived”). However the participle is classified, the emphasis is the same—deceit played a major role in the woman’s difficulty. The perfect tense of the verb γίνομαι is combined with the somewhat odd prepositional phrase ἐν παράβασι to highlight the fact that the woman has been led into a new condition: she “has entered the state of transgression.” The noun παράβασις is used only here in the PD, though it occurs three times in Romans (2:23; 4:15; 5:15) and once in Galatians (3:19). The term denotes deviation from an established boundary. In Paul, παράβασις refers specifically to the violation of God’s commandments. The point here is that, by accepting the lie of the serpent, Eve became a transgressor.

What do vv. 13-14 reveal about the situation in Ephesus? We should begin by noting that Paul incriminates Adam on other occasions. In Rom 5:14, for example, he refers to “the transgression of Adam” (τῆς παραβάσεως Ἀδὰμ). Mounce rightly notes that in Rom 5:12-21 “Paul lays the transmission of sin at Adam’s feet... and not at Eve’s.” For Paul, the first man and the first woman both became transgressors, but outside of 1 Timothy Paul seems to assign responsibility for the failure to Adam (note also 1 Cor 15:21-22). If Paul thinks of Adam as the responsible party, why does he highlight the deception of Eve in 1 Tim 2:14? In my judgment, Paul is not here altering his earlier position by assigning responsibility for the failure in the Garden to Eve, for this would be

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178 With Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 229.  
179 With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 74; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 144; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 464; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 229.  
180 BDAG, s.v. “παράβασις.”  
181 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 142.
inconsistent with what he seems to be arguing in v. 13: as the first-formed of God, Adam indeed bears the blame. Additionally, the divine passive (ἐπλάσθη, v. 13), applied to both the man and the woman (as discussed above), precludes the interpretation that Paul is here picturing the woman as inherently inferior. It seems highly unlikely that in one verse Paul would underscore the fact that God himself created the woman, and in the next verse insist that women lack spiritual acumen. Rather, I suggest that Paul recalls the fact that in the Genesis account the language of deception is used only in reference to Eve (Gen 3:13 LXX). The woman alone cries out, “The serpent deceived me.” The fact that Adam also disregarded God’s decree does not surface here. This is because Paul focuses on the moment of deception. Paul stresses the moment of Eve’s deception because it was at this moment that: 1) the serpent subverted the created order by approaching the woman with the hope of indoctrinating her, and 2) the woman embraced the words of the serpent, and she did so without involving the man. Apparently, a similar subversion of the order of creation is occurring in Ephesus: the opponents are approaching certain

[182] Contra Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 208, who claims that Paul intends to show that “women are less capable of distinguishing truth from error, or are too driven by their appetites to be reliable teachers and leaders.” Johnson goes on to point out that this logic is flawed. “The woman, after all, was deceived by ‘the most subtle creature that the Lord God had made’ (Gen 3:1), but all the woman had to do was offer the fruit to the man and he ate it (3:6)! Johnson’s conclusion is that “Paul was not in this case engaging in sober exegesis of Genesis.” Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 147, and Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 245, also claim that the author misinterprets/contradicts the Genesis narrative here. Huizenga, Moral Education for Women in the Pastoral and Pythagorean Letters, 311, says that the author of the PD finds in the woman a lesser capacity to make moral decisions.


[184] It is difficult to determine Adam’s precise location when the serpent appeared to Eve. Apparently, he was nearby (Gen 3:6), but in Paul’s telling of the narrative Adam was not close enough to hear the serpent’s lie (“Adam was not deceived”). Augustine writes: “By virtue of his angelic stature and his superior nature, Satan made the serpent subject to him in spiritual wickedness, and, by abusing it as his instrument, had deceitful converse with the woman” (Civ. 14.11, emphasis added).

[185] For similar conclusions, see Moo, “What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” 190; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 114–115; Merkle, “Paul’s Arguments from Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14,” 543: “The serpent, then, purposefully went against God’s created order of authority by approaching Eve and not Adam… Thus, the serpent broke God’s ‘chain of command,’ whereby the husband was the head of the wife. As the head of the relationship, Adam should have intervened and spoiled the serpent’s plan.”
women with their deviant doctrine, and these women are independently assenting to the
errors.

D. Women with Genuine Faith Will Produce Good Works, and Childbearing
is a Good Work (v. 15)

After stressing the deception that led to the woman’s state of transgression, Paul
brings the argument of the unit to a close. But the final plank of the argument is the most
perplexing. More than a few lexical/syntactical enigmas in v. 15 must be solved. 1) Why
does Paul shift from a singular verb (σωθήσεται) to a plural verb (μείνωσιν)? 2) What is
the meaning of the verb σφξω? 3) What is the significance of the hapax τεκνογονία? 4) What is the sense of the preposition δι? 5) What is the relationship between v. 15a and v. 15b?

First, to whom does Paul refer in v. 15? To understand the transition from the
singular σωθήσεται (“she will be saved”) to the plural μείνωσιν (“they remain”), we must
note the way Paul has referred to women throughout this section. In vv. 9-12, Paul
references Christian women in general. He first uses two plural forms (vv. 9-10). This is
followed by two generic singulars (vv. 11-12). Then, in vv. 13-14, Paul introduces Eve.
The first time he mentions Eve, he calls her by name (v. 13). The second time, however,
he refers to her as “the woman” (v. 14). This is likely Paul’s way of beginning his
transition back to Christian women in general. The move from Eve back to the women in
Ephesus follows a similar pattern as the initial move to Eve. Thus, the pericope comes to
a close with a singular verb (understood as a generic singular) and a plural verb. Both
terms refer to the Christian women in Ephesus; Paul is back where he began. The
following diagram demonstrates Paul’s movement.

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186 With Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 48; Moo, “1 Tim 2:11-
15,” 71; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 74; Stanley E. Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be
‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2.15)?,” JSNT 49 (1993): 101; Marshall, The Pastoral
Epistles, 467, 471; Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 76–77; Van Neste, Cohesion and
Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 39; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-
15,” 117. There are, however, a number of other interpretations. Jeremias, Die Briefe an
Timoteus und Titus, 19, claims that the woman’s children are included in the plural verb.
Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 137, argues that the plural refers to wives and their husbands.
(2013): 543-556, suggests the plural refers to Adam and Eve. Robert W. Wall, “1
Steele, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, THNTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012),
95, contend that Eve is the subject of the singular verb. Wieland, The Significance of
Second, what does Paul mean when he says that the women in Ephesus “will be saved” (σωθήσεται)? BDAG lists three basic meanings of the verb σωθήσεται: 1) to preserve from natural danger (physical preservation), 2) to preserve from transcendent danger (spiritual deliverance), and 3) a combination of meanings one and two.187 Porter asserts: “In virtually all authentically Pauline contexts σωθήσεται denotes a salvific spiritual act, perhaps eschatological in consequence.”188 The verb σωθήσεται occurs six other times in the PD, and each time it refers to spiritual deliverance (1 Tim 1:15; 2:4; 4:16; 2 Tim 1:9; 4:18; Titus 3:5). Moreover, the conditional clause in 1 Tim 2:15b lists qualities that Paul elsewhere associates with genuine spiritual salvation (e.g., 1 Tim 1:14). Hence, it is highly unlikely that Paul uses the term in the sense of physical preservation here.189 In 1 Tim 2:15a, σωθήσεται carries its usual theological weight.190

Salvation, 79, suggests that there could be a double focus to σωθήσεται; the term refers to Eve and to the Christian women in Ephesus. This view will be discussed further below.

187 BDAG, s.v. “σωθήσεται.”
188 Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2.15)?,” 93.
189 According to Winter, Roman Wives, Roman Widows, 111, abortion took many lives in antiquity. He concludes: “This text indicates that the Christian wife would be preserved by continuing in her pregnant condition (and thereby bearing a child) instead of terminating her pregnancy.” The problem with Winter’s interpretation, however, is that it demands that σωθήσεται be understood in the sense of physical preservation. Additionally, Lynn H. Cohick, Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 140, has suggested that Augustus's laws on marriage and childbirth, which play an important role in Winter's reconstruction, may have been imperial propaganda. Others who argue for the sense of physical preservation in 1 Tim 2:15a include Keener, Paul, Women & Wives, 118-119; Moyer Hubbard, “Kept Safe Through Childbearing: Maternal Mortality, Justification by Faith, and the Social Setting of 1 Timothy 2:15,” JETS 55 (2012): 743-762; Christopher R. Hutson, “‘Saved through Childbearing’: The Jewish Context of 1 Timothy 2:15,” NovT 56 (2014): 392-410. Hutson confesses that the case for treating σωθήσεται as a theological term seems strong in all its parts. However, he concludes: “The trouble is that the parts
Third, what is the significance of the term τεκνογονία? The word occurs only here in the NT, though the cognate verb form, τεκνογονέω, occurs in 1 Tim 5:14. The term τεκνογονία is extremely rare in Greek literature from classical times to the time of 1 Timothy and beyond. Why does Paul employ such an obscure term, and why does he do so at this particular point in his argument? I suggest that Eve prompts Paul to target the false teachers with the term τεκνογονία. It seems likely that, as Paul recalled Eve’s narrative, childbearing came to his mind. In this respect, Hubbard is right: “What could possibly prompt Paul to move from reflecting on Eve’s transgression in verse 14, to offering consolation related to childbearing in verse 15? The answer lies in the Genesis narrative itself; Paul’s epistolary logic is nothing more than the narrative development of Genesis.” Paul has been engaging with the Genesis narrative since v. 13. He has followed the story from creation (v. 13) to fall (v. 14). Interestingly, motherhood language is found in the next three scenes of Eve’s story (Gen 3:15-16, 20; 4:1).

Genesis 3:15 refers to the seed that shall bruise the serpent’s head. In Gen 3:16 LXX, the LORD God tells Eve that she will bear children in pain (ἐν λύπαις τέξῃ τέκνα). It should be noted that even in this text childbearing is not viewed negatively. Pain is added to childbearing because of Eve’s transgression, but childbearing itself is always viewed positively in the early chapters of Genesis (e.g., Gen 1:28). In Gen 3:20 LXX, Adam names his wife “Life” (Ζωή) because “she was the mother of all living” (μήτηρ ἀνθρώπων).

add up to a theological position so preposterous that one can hardly say it with a straight face, much less imagine how anyone could write it in the name of Paul” (407). The point is overstated, and Hutson fails to consider the corrective nature of v. 15a, which I discuss below.

With Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 31; Moo, “1 Tim 2:11-15,” 71; Payne, “Libertarian Women in Ephesus,” 178; Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus,” 141; Moo, “What Does It Mean to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2.11-15,” 192; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 467; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 144–145; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” 115–116; Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 79; Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2.15)?,” 94, who says that, in light of the cumulative evidence and the context of 1 Tim 2:15, “σωθήσεται is virtually guaranteed a salvific sense.”

See the references and analysis in Köstenberger, “Ascertaining Women’s God-Ordained Roles,” 140–142. He finds only two pre-Pauline occurrences.


Hubbard, “Kept Safe Through Childbearing,” 751.
πάντων τῶν ζωντων). Finally, in Gen 4:1 LXX, the birth of her child is for Eve a sign of her reconciliation with God (και συλλαβούσα ἐτεκεν τὸν Καίν καὶ ἐπεν ἐκτισάμην ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ). Any of these texts could have prompted Paul to combat the opponents’ prohibition of marriage, which would have included motherhood (1 Tim 4:3). The fact that Paul uses τεκνογονία where the LXX has τίκτω (Gen 3:16; 4:1) simply adds weight to my argument that Paul is in 1 Tim 2:13-15 recalling and retelling the Genesis narrative, without making any attempt to quote the passages verbatim. In sum, the motherhood language used of Eve leads Paul to use a tool from this domain to dismantle one of the key doctrines of the opponents. Because the words of v. 15a are so unlike anything Paul utters elsewhere, it is highly probable that this verse is intended to be a direct response to the opponents. Only in 1 Timothy does Paul clearly reference opponents forbidding marriage, and only in 1 Timothy does Paul link salvation and childbearing. Another reason to think that v. 15a is a refutation of the false teachers’ rejection of marriage is because this accounts for the fact that Paul only refutes the opponents’ rejection of food, with no comment about their view of marriage, in 1 Tim 4:1-5. By the time the reader comes to 4:1-5, it is as if the rejection of marriage has already been handled. It seems that the false teachers were claiming that marriage and

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194 Perhaps the most common interpretation throughout the history of the church has been that Paul thinks of Gen 3:15 here, and τεκνογονία refers specifically to Mary’s childbirth, i.e., the birth of Messiah. This was certainly a popular way of reading the text among the earliest interpreters (see Payne, “Libertarian Women in Ephesus,” 177–178, for references). Though theologcially appealing, this view requires, as Porter says, an exegetical leap of faith; there is nothing in the text itself to indicate that Paul’s focus shifts from Eve to Mary (see Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ [1 Timothy 2.15]?,” 90-92). If Gen 3:15 served as Paul’s inspiration, then Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 80, is probably correct: “For Eve, the arena in which the effects of the fall are felt (v. 16) becomes at the same time the focus of hope and promise (v. 15), as she looks through the pain of childbirth to the ultimate defeat of the serpent through her offspring… This is not quite the same as referring [τεκνογονία] to the bearing of Jesus by Mary… It is rather to Eve’s childbearing, but looking on to its far-off consequence in the birth of the Messiah.” For Wieland, the process of childbirth, which began with Eve, is a necessary part of God’s redemptive plan. “This has the practical effect of affirming motherhood…” (84). However, Gen 4:1 seems to be the most plausible trigger, for in this text Eve’s childbearing is evidence of reconciliation, and the larger point Paul appears to be making in 1 Tim 2:15 is that good works are evidence of genuine salvation (discussed further below).

195 BDAG, s.v. “τίκτω”: “to give birth.”
motherhood somehow endangered salvation. For this reason, Paul links maternity and spiritual security here in v. 15a.

This leads to the fourth inquiry: what is the sense of the διά in v. 15a? With its object in the genitive case, the preposition may have a temporal or some sort of instrumental sense. The temporal sense would be one of duration: “she will be saved during childbearing.” There are two major difficulties with this classification. First, when διά has a temporal sense, it usually is accompanied by a temporal word, such as “day,” “night,” or “year” (e.g., Acts 1:3; 5:10; 24:17; Gal 2:1). Second, when διά occurs with σῴζω, it almost always has an instrumental sense (e.g., John 3:17; Acts 15:11; Rom 5:9; 1 Cor 1:21; 15:2; Eph 2:8; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21). Consequently, the instrumental sense of the preposition is the most likely option in this context. διά does not, however, indicate the ultimate means of salvation, since Paul has just emphasized that Christ is the sole mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2:5-6), the one who has accomplished the salvation of sinners (1 Tim 1:14-16). Here, διά expresses the efficient means of salvation. Murray Harris explains that διά with the genitive does at times indicate efficient means.

“From the local/spatial sense of διά there naturally developed the instrumental sense, because...”

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196 Wieland, *The Significance of Salvation*, 76: “It is not inconceivable that some were teaching that [marriage and procreation] disqualified women from salvation.” See also Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus*, 143. Gritz also insists that the strange connection between salvation and childbearing is due to the fact that v. 15 is a corrective. She explains that Paul here “promises Christian women—wives—that they can bring children into the world without endangering their own salvation in Christ.”

197 Kenneth L. Waters, “Saved Through Childbearing: Virtues as Children in 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 703–735, offers an allegorical reading of 1 Tim 2:11-15. He argues that the good works Paul mentions in v. 15b are portrayed as the offspring of the genuine Christian woman. Thus, the rare concept of “childbearing” is akin to the more common idea of “fruit bearing.” While this interpretation is interesting, a figurative reading of the passage is unnecessary. Waters fails to give sufficient weight to the fact that the opponents prohibited marriage; therefore, he has no choice but to conclude: “The author does indeed appear to connect the salvation of women to childbearing, but the idea is at odds with the rest of Pauline thought when it is taken literally” (712).

198 See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 368–369; BDF §223; BDAG, s.v. “διά.”

199 Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2.15)?,” 97.

200 Wieland, *The Significance of Salvation*, 79.
which marks the medium through which an action passes before its accomplishment.”

Paul has already in this pericope emphasized the importance of “good works” (δι᾿ ἔργων ἀγαθῶν, v. 10). Here in v. 15a, Paul claims that childbearing is one of these “good works.” The redemptive arrangement of God is apprehended by faith (1 Tim 1:4), but Paul is clear that genuine faith perseveres through the avenue of good works (1 Tim 2:15). Such a link between faith and works is not at all surprising; Paul frequently refers to good works as the evidence of genuine salvation (undisputed: Rom 2:6-8; disputed: Eph 2:8-10). It is the reference to childbearing that causes problems for interpreters. But once it is understood that τεκνογονία is a corrective term, Paul’s argument becomes more intelligible. The point is not that a woman must bear children if she is to preserve her place in the salvific scheme. Rather, Paul seeks to move childbearing from the inappropriate side of the spectrum, where the opponents locate it, to the side of good works.

Finally, v. 15b confirms what has been concluded thus far. To correct any potential misunderstanding of salvation, Paul qualifies the somewhat uncharacteristic

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201 Murray J. Harris, Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 70, emphasis original. The undisputed Paul uses the preposition this way in Gal 5:6: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through (διὰ) love.”

202 Merz, Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus, 295–296, connects 1 Tim 2:15 to 1 Tim 4:16, claiming that childbearing is to women what teaching is to Timothy—a good deed and a way to salvation. See also Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 1:382: “La Femme sera sauvée non en enseignant (IV,16), mais en enfantant.”

203 With Moo, “1 Tim 2:11-15,” 72.

204 Thus, Huizenga, Moral Education for Women in the Pastoral and Pythagorean Letters, 244, is in error when she claims that it is very difficult to imagine an assertion such as this coming from the hand of Paul. The assertion does not seem to be “contrary to the classic statements of Pauline justification by faith, not by works of the law.” Additionally, Tamez, Struggles for Power in Early Christianity, 46, misses the point when she says, “Obviously, the author’s intention is to take away the position that some rich and dominant women had assumed. In order to do that he uses the domestic codes in relation to the position and role that the patriarchal culture had assigned to women and propounds a theology with a concept of salvation very different from the Pauline tradition and the movement of Jesus.”

205 Obviously, this particular good work is not one that will be found in all Christian women (e.g., 1 Cor 7:8), though all Christian women will devote themselves to works of this nature (1 Tim 2:10).
remark of v. 15a: “But women will be saved through (good works like) childbearing, provided that they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control.” I have suggested that the language of v. 15a is corrective. It is in v. 15b, as Paul leaves the battlefield, that he is able to choose his own ground and establish his position. As George Wieland astutely points out, “This final clause, then, is not merely a rider to the substantive statement but is itself the primary salvation statement.” The three terms—πίστις, ἀγάπη, and ἁγιασμός—are grouped by two copulatives to form a single thought. πίστις refers either to the activity associated with conversion or to the new sphere brought about by conversion. The use of σωφροσύνη establishes a link with the discussion of adornment in v. 9. The woman with authentic faith, which activates love, holiness, self-control, and all good works, is the subject of v. 15.

E. Summary and Reflection

In 1 Tim 2:9-15, Paul provides instructions for Christian women at worship. Paul first tells Christian women to avoid ostentatious and seductive attire and accoutrements. He insists that the wardrobe of the godly woman consists of “good works” (ἔργων ἀγαθῶν) that flow from genuine faith in Christ (vv. 9-10). Next, Paul outlines proper participation in worship. Christian women, those who have come to the knowledge of the truth, are to increase in their understanding of the faith (μαθήματα), but they are not permitted to instruct (διδάσκω) the gathered church (vv. 11-12). To justify his proscription, Paul turns to Genesis, offering a reading of the creation account that focuses on the order of creation and the moment of deception (vv. 13-14). In Paul’s reading of the creation account, Adam’s precedence places upon him spiritual responsibility, which means that the Christian men in Ephesus are tasked with the teaching of the faith in the congregational setting (v. 13). Moreover, Paul highlights the moment of Eve’s deception

206 Again, I understand σωθήσεται to be referring to all the Christian women in Ephesus.
207 The third class condition (ἐάν + the subjunctive mood) introduces a logical limit, as in 1 Tim 1:8. See Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 689.
208 With Fee, I and 2 Timothy, Titus, 76; Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus, 144.
209 Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 81.
210 See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:3-7 in the previous chapter.
211 This is the only occurrence of ἁγιασμός in the PD. The term refers to holiness or consecration. BDAG, s.v. “ἁγιασμός.”
212 Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 82.
ἐξαπατάω because it was at this moment that the serpent subverted the created order by approaching the woman, and the woman embraced false claims (v. 14). It seems that a similar subversion of the order of creation was occurring in Ephesus. The opponents, who prohibited marriage and motherhood (1 Tim 2:15; 4:3), were approaching Christian women with their deviant doctrine, leading some of these women to abandon their role in the home. Despite what the opponents say, Paul claims that maternity is one of many good works that flow from the woman with sincere faith (v. 15).

Based on the above analysis, I conclude that in the first subsection of 1 Tim 2:9-15, the opponents are only partly in view, but by the end of the pericope they stand center stage. The selection of what not to wear (v. 9) suggests that there were some wealthy women in Ephesus. Since in this pericope Paul affiliates these women with the false teachers, and since he indicates elsewhere that the opponents accept payment for their teaching (1 Tim 6:5), we may presume that some women in Ephesus were contributing financially to the opponents’ operation. However, little else can be established from 1 Tim 2:9-10. It is highly unlikely that the opponents who prohibited marriage and motherhood (synonymous with celibacy) also encouraged women to dress seductively. Towner rightly suggests: “[Paul] may have been looking in two directions at once—toward heretical developments and cultural influences.”

The opponents swayed a selection of women to reject their place in the home, and some of these same women may have gone on to adopt the social mores of the “new Roman woman,” but it would be inconsistent with the evidence found elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 1 Tim 4:3) to conclude that the opponents are directly responsible for the proclivity for promiscuous attire.

While they were not directly responsible for the comments concerning dress code (vv. 9-10), the opponents probably compelled Paul to provide the instructions contained in vv. 11-15. The throwing off of their traditional role in the house either led some women to reject their role in the house of God or caused Paul to anticipate this as the inevitable next step. Thus, he reminds the women in Ephesus of their proper role in the congregational setting (vv. 11-12). A final assessment of the place of women in the opponents’ group must await the exegetical analysis of 1 Tim 5:13-15 and 2 Tim 3:6-7, but I conclude that the evidence of this pericope favors the interpretation that Paul prohibits all Christian women in Ephesus from teaching in the congregational setting, not just women who were promulgating the false teaching.

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In v. 14, Paul draws his readers’ attention to the moment of deception in the Garden of Eden, the moment when the serpent subverted the order of creation and swindled Eve. The most plausible explanation for the emphasis on Eve’s deception is that many of her descendants in Ephesus were likewise being deceived. Some women in Ephesus were listening to “seductive spirits and demonic doctrines” (1 Tim 4:1), and one of these specific doctrines seems to have been that marriage and motherhood somehow disqualified women from salvation (1 Tim 4:4; 2:15). Recalling the discussion of 1 Tim 4:1-5 in the previous chapter, it seems likely that the opponents claimed that marriage and motherhood were inappropriate actions for a woman “in the resurrection.” Paul counters this claim by arguing, quite to the contrary, that the bearing of children is a “good work” (v. 15). “Good works” are the adornment of the Christian woman (v. 10) and the avenue through which she perseveres in the salvific scheme (v. 15), the “redemptive arrangement of God that is by faith” (1 Tim 1:4).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have concentrated on 1 Tim 1:8-11 and 1 Tim 2:9-15, and I have unearthed important information about the opponents. Conclusions from the previous chapter have been corroborated and new details have come to light. But three relevant passages in 1 Timothy (4:6-10; 5:9-16; 6:6-10) still need to be analyzed. These units will be the focus of the following chapter.
4

Exegetical Analysis of Implicit Units in 1 Timothy 4-6

Introduction

In this chapter I will complete my exegetical analysis of 1 Timothy. Having focused in the previous chapter on the implicit units in 1 Tim 1-3, I will now direct my attention to the second half of the letter. Major themes from the explicit passages are repeated in three sections of 1 Tim 4-6. First, 1 Tim 4:6-10 contains comments about godliness (repeated from 4:1-5) and a warning about mythology (repeated from 1:3-7). Second, in 5:9-16 the subject of marriage resurfaces (see 4:1-5), and once again it is said that some have sided with Satan (see 1:18-20). Finally, in 6:6-10 Paul warns the Christian community about the allure of wealth. The admonition in this short section probably is related to the financial motivation of the opponents (as discussed in 6:2b-5).

I. The Good Servant’s Goal of Godliness (1 Tim 4:6-10)

The discussion of the false teachers (4:1-5) is immediately followed by words of encouragement for Timothy (4:6-10). That Timothy is primarily in view in this pericope is evidenced by the second-person singular verbs (ἔσῃ, παρηκολούθηκας, παραίτοῦ, γύμναξε). Ray Van Neste points out that the imperatives in 1 Tim 4:7 are the first second-person singular imperatives in the entire letter. “This marks a shift to exhortations to Timothy specifically concerning himself, rather than concerning the church as in chapters 2-3.” Thus, this unit primarily, though not exclusively, provides us with information about how Timothy, the delegate on the ground in Ephesus, is to counter the false teachers. The unit will also provide us with information about how Paul, the letter-writer, combats the opponents. I will argue that Paul intends at least some of the faithful sayings to be quick but sharp blows to the opponents. Finally, the unit will supply us with some new data about the opponents themselves.

A. Timothy Must Continue in the Good Teaching (v. 6)

1 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 245, suggests this is Paul’s pattern throughout the letter.
2 Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 47.
The plural demonstrative pronoun, ταῦτα, refers to instruction issued previously in the letter, either to the content of the entire epistle,\(^3\) 2:1-4:5,\(^4\) 3:14-4:5,\(^5\) 4:1-5,\(^6\) or 4:3b-5.\(^7\) The repetition of ταῦτα in 1 Tim 4 (v. 6, v. 11, v. 15) suggests that Paul is continually referring back to smaller units of material. Here, he probably refers back to the apostolic interpretation of the creation account (4:3b-5). The adjective καλὸς\(^8\) links 4:4 and 4:6; Timothy will be a “good” servant by pointing out that everything created by God is “good.” Though often taken as conditional (NKJV, NRSV, ESV, NIV), ὑποτιθέμενος is better classified as an adverbial participle of means.\(^9\) Timothy is to continue (note the present participle) on his current path of instructing “the brothers” (τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς), that is, the entire Christian community.\(^10\) ὑποτίθημι is used only twice in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: Rom 16:4; disputed: 1 Tim 4:6), though the term occurs thirteen times in the LXX and thirteen times in Philo.\(^11\) In the middle voice, the verb means “to suggest” or “to commend.”\(^12\) For Paul, the term does not appear to be as strong as παραγγέλλω, and we may presume it is slightly different from διδάσκω, both of which Paul uses in the ταῦτα phrase of 1 Tim 4:11. In the context of 4:6, the verb must refer to the passing on of authoritative instruction, so “to suggest” probably is too weak a translation. The general

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\(^3\) LW 28:319; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 248; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 91–92.

\(^4\) Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 102.


\(^6\) Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 193; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge, 188.

\(^7\) Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 548; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 302.

\(^8\) See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:8 in chapter three.

\(^9\) Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 248.

\(^10\) Paul Trebilco, “What Shall We Call Each Other? Part One: The Issue of Self-designation in the Pastoral Epistles,” TynBul 53 (2002): 249–252, suggests that, as in the undisputed Paulines, the term ἀδελφὸς is used in the PD as a way of referring to the Christian community, though he points out that the term is significantly less common in the PD (1 Tim 4:6; 5:1; 6:2; 2 Tim 4:21). Trebilco concludes that this is due to the fact that in the PD the church is regarded as the household of God, and the perception of the church as household seems to have led to the development of an internal hierarchy, similar to the hierarchy found in the Greco-Roman household. See also Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 92. The reference should not be limited to leaders in the congregation. Contra Schlarb, Die gesunde Lehre, 282.

\(^11\) See, for example, Philo, Post. 12; Moses 2.51: ἐν τῇ γῇ ταῖς προστάξει καὶ ἀπαγορεύσεσιν ὑποτίθεσαι καὶ παραγορεῖ τὸ πλέον ἡ κελεύει.

\(^12\) BDAG, s.v. “ὑποτίθημι.”
idea, it seems, is commendation.\textsuperscript{13} As he advocates Paul’s teaching about the goodness of God’s creation (1 Tim 4:3b-5), Timothy will counter the antagonists, who banned certain foods, probably because they considered them to be tainted or profane.\textsuperscript{14}

Moreover, by commending Paul’s teaching to the believers in Ephesus, Timothy will be a “good servant of Christ Jesus” (καλὸς διάκονος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). The noun διάκονος has as its most basic meaning “servant,” “waiter,” or “assistant.”\textsuperscript{15} The undisputed Paul can use διάκονος to refer to Christ (Rom 15:8), those who assist Satan (2 Cor 11:15), and those who serve the Lord (e.g., 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; see also Eph 3:7). διάκονος can also refer to the one who holds the office of deacon (undisputed: Rom 16:1?; Phil 1:1; disputed: 1 Tim 3:8, 12). Used here of his delegate, διάκονος indicates the same type of gospel-centered service to which Paul himself was called. Like Paul, Timothy is to make the word of God fully known (compare Eph 3:7; Col 1:25).

That Timothy’s ministry is primarily one of proclamation is clear from the second half of v. 6. The participle, ἐντρεφόμενος, is parallel to the opening participle, ὑποτιθέμενος. ὑποτιθέμενος indicates the means by which Timothy will achieve the status of a good servant; ἐντρεφόμενος further describes the good servant.\textsuperscript{16} The verb ἐντρέφω occurs only here in the NT, and it is absent in the LXX. In the contemporary literature, the term means “to rear” or “to nourish,” and it is often applied to the process of “training” in virtue (e.g., Epictetus, Disc. 4.4.48). Philo claims: “Children ought to inherit from the father of their being the national customs in which they have been brought up (ἐντρέφω), and in which they have lived from their cradle” (Spec. 4.150). He also speaks of the “banquet” (θοίνη) that “nourishes” (ἐντρέφω) the mind (Sacr. 33). Since the participle here in 1 Tim 4:6 is present, the emphasis is not on Timothy’s past upbringing (compare 2 Tim 1:5) but on his continual nourishment.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{13} Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 303, proposes that the verb ὑποτιθήμημι might reflect the congenial setting of giving instruction among the faithful, “which could take more the form of leading in a didactic discussion, as opposed to commanding or correcting.”

\textsuperscript{14} See the discussion of 1 Tim 4:1-5 in chapter two.

\textsuperscript{15} BDAG, s.v. “διάκονος”; Beyer, TDNT, s.v. “διάκονος.”

\textsuperscript{16} With Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 303–304n6.

\textsuperscript{17} With Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, 106; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 194; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 549; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 304. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 249, claims the participle describes Timothy’s day-to-day habits, though he prefers the translation “training.”
The sustenance of the good servant is described as “the words of the faith and the good teaching” (τοῖς λόγοις τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς καλῆς διδασκαλίας). λόγος occurs in the plural only four times in the PD (1 Tim 4:6; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:15). As in 1 Tim 6:3, the plural form refers to the sum of Christ-centered doctrine. The second noun phrase clarifies the first. “The good teaching” (τῆς καλῆς διδασκαλίας) is equivalent to “the healthy teaching” (τῇ υγιαινώσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ, 1 Tim 1:10), which refers to the body of Christian doctrine with the gospel at its core. In contrast to the evil teaching of the opponents (διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων, 1 Tim 4:1), the message here in 1 Tim 4:6 is deemed “good,” because in 1 Tim 1:11 it is said to be the message that reveals the glory of the transcendent God. Additionally, where the opponents are “men depraved in mind” (διεφθαρμένων ἀνθρώπων τὸν νοῦν, 1 Tim 6:5), Timothy is a man with a mind for the truth. The verb παρακολουθέω here means “to follow with the mind” (2 Tim 3:10; 2 Macc 9:27; Epictetus, Disc. 1.6.13). In summary, Timothy has set his mind on the good teaching (παρακολουθέω), he must continue to be nourished by this teaching (ἐντρέφω), and he must continue to commend this teaching to the congregation (ὑποτίθημι).

B. Timothy Must Reject the Opponents’ Mythology and Train for Godliness (v. 7)

Continuing in the “good teaching” necessarily involves rejecting the opponents’ teaching, which Paul here presents as a mythology. Some interpreters find very little data in v. 7a. Roloff writes: “Inhaltlich wird die Irrlehre wieder mit stark abwertenden Prädikaten bedacht: es handelt sich um μύθοι, d. h. um erfundene, in jeder Hinsicht unwahre Erzählungen.” Sumney also suggests that μύθος is a derogatory evaluation, one that reveals nothing specific about the opponents. This conclusion can be challenged.

I suggest that Paul’s use of μύθος reveals basic but important facts about the opponents. I noted in my discussion of 1 Tim 1:4 that Paul disapproves of the “myths” and “genealogies” of the opponents precisely because they are associated with speculation (ἐκζήτησις) that is at odds with the redemptive arrangement of God that is by

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18 See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:3 in chapter two.
19 See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:11 in the previous chapter.
20 BDAG, s.v. “παρακολουθέω.” See also Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 195; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 550; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 243; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 304.
21 Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 242.
22 Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 271.
faith (σιγκομίαν θεού τὴν ἐν πίστει). Hence, we may conclude, first, that the opponents’ “myths” are connected to some alternative soteriological arrangement. Additionally, it is probably significant that here in 1 Tim 4:7 “myths” are contrasted with “godliness” (εὐσέβεια), a term that has both a theological and an ethical facet. Thus, we may conclude, second, that the opponents’ “myths” have behavioral implications. It appears that the opponents made no attempt to sever belief and behavior; the problem was that their distorted beliefs could not be translated into God-pleasing behavior.

It will be important to rehearse a few previous points here. The first time the opponents’ “myths” are mentioned in the letters, they occur in close proximity to a reference to the law (1 Tim 1:4, 7). Because of this, I have suggested that it is likely the opponents’ imaginative reading of the OT that Paul classifies as “myths.” In my discussion of 1 Tim 6:20-21a, I hypothesized that the opponents, who probably thought they were living only in the age to come, laid claim to a more complete knowledge, a knowledge they thought enabled them to see things in the Scriptures that others could not see. If these points, tentative as they must remain at this stage, are correct, then this means that the opponents’ mythology (i.e., their soteriological arrangement with behavioral implications) was either based upon or found support in their “new” reading of the law. Most (if not all) strands of the opponents’ teaching I have uncovered thus far seem to be best explained as distortions of Pauline teaching. It appears to be more plausible, then, that the opponents based their teaching on Paul’s words and then attempted to find further justification for their claims in the law, though overall conclusions must be postponed until all oppositional units have been analyzed.

Here in 1 Tim 4:7, Paul describes the “myths” of the opponents as “godless and characteristic of the gullible.” βέβηλος is used in reference to the opponents three times in the PD (1 Tim 4:7; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:16). The term characterizes their message as “worldly”

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24 See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:3 in chapter two.
25 Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 305, hints at this. The term μῦθος “characterizes the heresy as false and deceptive in its moral implications.” See also Gunther, *St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background*, 78: “Genealogy and myth were components of biographical legends which purported to be didactic and edifying sacred history supplementing and reconciling Scripture” (emphasis added).
26 Anticipating the discussion of 2 Tim 2:18 in chapter five.
or “godless,” in contrast to the transcendental truth of the gospel (κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ, 1 Tim 1:11). The second adjective, γραώδης, is a NT hapax. Though not documented in the LXX or the Apostolic Fathers, the term is used in philosophical argumentation (e.g., Plato, Resp. 350E; Gorg. 527a; Epictetus, Disc. 2.16.39). γραώδης appears to come from γραῦς (“old woman”). The phrase in 1 Tim 4:7 is generally translated “old wives’ tales/fables” (ASV, NRSV, NKJV, NIV), but this does not capture the seriousness of the warning, and such a translation could easily be misconstrued. Quinn and Wacker argue that, by using γραώδης, Paul labels the opponents’ message as “fables that grown men would lend no credence to but that might entertain youngsters.” Kartzow, in her study of gossip and gender in the PD, discusses the term γραολογία (“old wives’ gossip”), and argues that, in the ancient world, the combination of a certain age and a certain gender gave specific connotations related to speech. She suggests: “To be gossipy was problematic for the male elite, among whom manliness had to be won and constantly upheld… The Pastoral Paul applies terms drawn from the stereotype of gossip as rhetorical devices in order to undermine the masculinity, and hence the authority, of his opponents.” Despite the fact that elsewhere in the letter Paul does associate women with the opponents’ teaching (e.g., 2:9-15), the reference here

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27 BDAG, s.v. “βέβηλος”: “pertaining to being worldly as opposed to having an interest in transcendent matters.” See also Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 550; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 243; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 305.

28 Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 243n119; Kartzow, Gossip and Gender, 137n513.

29 As pointed out by Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 243-244, though he fails to offer a satisfying alternative, saying only that the language is “stereotypically dismissive” (244).

30 To the modern ear, the phrase “old wives’ tales” smacks of chauvinism. Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 195, argues that when Paul uses the phrase it cannot carry any negative overtones about sex or age, since elsewhere in the letter he tells Timothy to respect both younger and older women (1 Tim 5:2). But Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 251, retorts: “One wonders, however, if Paul would have had the same sensitivity as a modern editor to this particular issue.”

31 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 367, later adding: “Its recherché sound gives it a nasty sting, as a learned man dismissing a pretentious quack” (374).

32 Kartzow, Gossip and Gender, 138.

33 Ibid., 205. See also Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 84, who describes the opponents’ message as “unreliable gossip.”
is probably not to be taken literally (i.e., myths spread by old women). Paul commandeers a well-known term from philosophical discourse and uses the term figuratively. His chief concern seems to be to classify the opponents’ teaching as untrustworthy.

Because the opponents’ teaching is worldly (βέβηλος) and thoroughly unreliable (γραώδης), it is to be rejected (παραιτέομαι). The verb παραιτέομαι has two basic meanings: “to request” and “to avert.” Paul uses the term three times in reference to opponents (1 Tim 4:7; 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:10). With the accusative of thing (1 Tim 4:7, μύθους; 2 Tim 2:23, ζητήσεις), the verb denotes total rejection and rebuttal; where the object is a person (Titus 3:10), the term carries the idea of dismissal, that is, refusing to associate with a certain individual. Here, Paul calls Timothy to an ongoing ministry (note the present imperative) of repudiation. He himself must not accept the false teaching, and he must ensure that the brothers (τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς, v. 6) understand the inadequacies of these “myths” as well.

In the second part of v. 7, Paul introduces the idea of exercise (γυμνάζω, “to exercise”), and this concept will continue into v. 8. Paul uses another present imperative (Γύμναζε) to highlight the perpetual nature of Timothy’s exercise. The delegate’s training is not just for a specific season. The verb γυμνάζω appears only here in the Pauline corpus, though the term is used by the author of Hebrews (5:14; 12:11) and by the author of 2 Peter (2:14). The verb was first used of athletes who engage in physical training (e.g., Josephus, Ant, 6.185). It transferred naturally to describe mental or moral striving

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34 Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 181.  
35 BDAG, s.v. “παραιτέομαι.”  
36 Stählin, TDNT, s.v. “παραιτέομαι.” See also Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 550; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 305n11.  
37 BDAG, s.v. “γυμνάζω”; Oepke, TDNT, s.v. “γυμνάζω.” See also Pfitzner, Paul and the Agon Motif, 172. Compare Robert Paul Seesengood, “Contending for the Faith in Paul’s Absence: Combat Sports and Gladiators in the Disputed Pauline Epistles,” LTQ 41 (2006): 87–118. Pfitzner points out that Paul uses both the military image and the athletic image (158). On the contrary, Seesengood suggests that the author of the PD makes reference to the one figure of the gladiator. But it seems unlikely that Paul would compare “the practice of deadly martial combat as entertainment” (94) with the practice of Christian ministry (101). Additionally, Paul demonstrates elsewhere that he has no problem mingling metaphors (e.g., the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer in 2 Tim 1:1-7), so there is no need to search for a single individual of antiquity on whom all of Paul’s imagery might be based.
(e.g., Epictetus, Disc. 2.18.27; Philo, Somn. 2.263; Moses 1.48).38 In 1 Tim 4:7b, Timothy is told to exercise “for the goal of godliness” (πρὸς εὐσέβειαν). The preposition πρὸς with the accusative denotes movement toward a location or goal.39 Victor Pfitzner rightly suggests: “In the picture of the Agon Paul emphasises the motif of the goal for which the ‘athlete’ strives.”40 Here, Paul underlines the goal of “godliness”; Timothy is to continue in the good teaching (right belief) so that he will produce good works (right behavior).41 As in 1 Tim 1:5, the visible expression of the apostolic gospel is the τέλος of Timothy’s commission.

C. Godliness is Supreme because it is the Path of Life (v. 8)

Verse 8 provides grounding (γάρ) for the command given in v. 7b.42 Timothy is to train for the goal of godliness because of the limited benefits of physical training. The noun γυμνασία is a NT hapax. The term refers to “training,”43 and here the reference is clearly limited by the adjective σωματικός (“pertaining to the physical body”).44 ωφέλιμος is found in the NT only in the PD (1 Tim 4:8; 2 Tim 3:16; Titus 3:8), but its cognates are used elsewhere by the undisputed Paul (e.g., Rom 2:25; 1 Cor 13:3; 14:6; 15:32; Gal 5:2). The term can be translated in a number of ways: “beneficial,” “useful,” or “advantageous.”45 The prepositional phrase πρὸς δῶλον occurs three times in the NT. In both Heb 12:10 and Jas 4:14 the phrase means “for a short time,” but Marshall insists that this meaning is impossible in 1 Tim 4:8 because of the contrasting prepositional phrase, πρὸς πάντα (“for all things”).46 However, the end of v. 8 (τῆς νῦν καὶ τῆς μελλούσης) indicates that the contrast is primarily temporal; the issue is not how much value each type of exercise has, but for how long one may reap the benefits of each form of

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38 See the discussion and additional references in Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 243–245; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 550–551; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 249; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 305.
39 BDF §239.7; BDAG, s.v. “πρὸς”; Harris, Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament, 189.
40 Pfitzner, Paul and the Agon Motif, 158.
41 With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 103; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 551; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 305–306; Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 49.
42 With Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 49; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 306.
43 Oepke, TDNT, s.v. “γυμνασία.”
44 BDAG, s.v. “σωματικός.”
45 BDAG, s.v. “ωφέλιμος.”
training.⁴⁷ “Physical training,” Paul says plainly, “is beneficial for a little while” (πρὸς ἐλγαίν ἐστίν ὕφέλιμος). “Training for the goal of godliness,”⁴⁸ on the other hand, “is beneficial for all things, holding the promise of life both now and in the future” (πρὸς πάντα ὕφέλιμος ἐστίν ἐπαγγελλὰν ἐξουσά ζωῆς τῆς νῦν καὶ τῆς μελλούσης).

The participle ἐξουσά is causal, explaining why godliness is the preferred practice. Timothy is to pursue godliness because of the promise (ἐπαγγελλὰ) that invariably is associated with it. Here, ἐχω is a strong connective; the promise of life cannot be claimed apart from the practice of godliness, and the practice of godliness will always carry the promise of life.⁴⁹ The language of promise is common in Paul (undisputed: Rom 4:13-20; 9:4-9; 2 Cor 1:20; 7:1; Gal 3:14-29; disputed: Eph 1:13; 2:12; 3:6). But the phrase “promise of life” (ἐπαγγελλὰν ζωῆς)⁵⁰ occurs only once more in the NT (2 Tim 1:1). In 2 Tim 1:1, the reference is to the “promise of life that is in Christ Jesus” (ἐπαγγελλὰν ζωῆς τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἡσυχ). In the same chapter, Paul explains that it is “our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life (ζωῆ) and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10). Here in 1 Tim 4:8, ζωῆ refers to the eternal status of the believer; Christ came bearing the gift of ζωῆ, the believer has received ζωῆ by virtue of his or her union with Christ now (νῦν), and this ζωῆ will be fully realized and enjoyed in the future (μέλλω).⁵¹ Timothy must train for the goal of godliness because godliness is indeed beneficial for all things. Only in godliness does one find abundant life, true eschatological existence.⁵²

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⁴⁷ See also Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 252.
⁴⁸ Paul omits, for the sake of brevity, an element that is necessary to complete the thought (brachyology). See BDF §483. Though only the term εὑσέβεια is used in v. 8, the image of exercise obviously carries over from v. 7, and the contrast with σωματική γυμνασία means that we should translate ἦ δὲ εὑσέβεια πρὸς πάντα ὕφελιμος ἐστίν as “but training for the goal of godliness is beneficial for all things.” See also Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 199; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 553n80; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 307n22.
⁴⁹ BDAG, s.v. “ἐχω.” Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 553, writes: “As the expression of faith and obedience towards God, godliness is the path to receiving what he promises.”
⁵⁰ ζωῆς should be classified as a genitive of content (“the promise full of/containing life”). With Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 200; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 253; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 307n23. Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 553, calls it a genitive of source, content.
⁵¹ See the discussion of ζωῆ in Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 199–200.
⁵² Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 253.
One further matter requires attention: What kindles the contrast in v. 8 between physical training and training for godliness? Do we have here some sort of proverbial comparison or poetic creation to balance the real emphasis, godliness? Or, does Paul use the language of “physical training” as a way of zeroing in on the opponents’ extreme practices? It seems probable that Paul has the opponents in mind here. He has just pinpointed two of the opponents’ extreme practices: they require abstinence from marriage/sex and certain foods (1 Tim 4:3). This makes it likely that he is still thinking of these practices when he uses the term γυμνασία. Moreover, Paul has just classified the opponents’ myths as “worldly” (βέβηλος, 1 Tim 4:7), so it seems logical for him to refer to the opponents’ practices as “bodily,” that is, as merely pertaining to the physical. It is significant that Paul refers to the opponents’ practices as bodily training of a temporary nature, since, as I will argue in chapter five, they likely advocated a spiritual experience that could be enjoyed presently in what they considered to be the eternal age. Despite what the opponents claimed, Paul underscores the fact that godliness is the true path of eschatological existence.

D. Servants Strive for Godliness because the Living God is the Savior of the Faithful (vv. 9-10)

Having established the connection between godliness and life, Paul concludes the pericope by emphasizing that it is the “Living God” (θεός ζωντι) who offers the “promise

53 See Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 246; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 551–552; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 253. Mounce also discusses the possibility that, out of concern for Timothy’s health (1 Tim 5:23), Paul actually calls for some physical exercise here. He rightly dismisses this option as implausible. Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 104, also argues: “Is Paul herewith trying to encourage Timothy to take a little physical exercise? Almost certainly not. Such a concern is irrelevant to the context and quite beside the point.”

54 See Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 173; Pfitzner, Paul and the Agon Motif, 173; Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 149–150; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, 1, 2 Timothy and Titus, NAC (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 134; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 249; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 93.

55 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 552, states, “But there is no evidence that γυμνασία can have this meaning.” γυμνασία could, however, be a synecdoche of the genus, a word of wider meaning used for a narrower sense. Perhaps Paul thinks of the opponents’ asceticism as an extreme example from the wide category of physical training. See also Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 307.

56 A number of commentators are disturbed by the thought that, if the opponents are in view in v. 8, then it seems that Paul ascribes some value to their asceticism. See, for example, Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 196; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 552; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 253. But, as I have argued above, the contrast in v. 8 is primarily temporal.
Here we come across, for the first time in our exegetical analysis, the faithful saying formula (v. 9). Five times in the PD, Paul uses the formula \( \text{πιστὸς ὁ λόγος}, \) “trustworthy is the word” (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8). \( \text{πιστὸς} \) is used in the passive sense and should be translated as “trustworthy,” “faithful,” or “reliable.”\(^{58}\) \( \text{λόγος} \) refers to a statement or a declaration.\(^{59}\) An expanded version of the formula is found in 1 Tim 1:15 and here in 1 Tim 4:9 (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἔξιος, “trustworthy is the word and worthy of all acceptance”). The noun ἀποδοχή occurs in the NT only in 1 Timothy; the essential meaning is “acceptance.”\(^{60}\) Paul uses the adjective ἔξιος (“worthy”) eight times in his letters (undisputed: Rom 1:32; 8:18; 1 Cor 16:4; disputed: 2 Thess 1:3; 1 Tim 1:15; 4:9; 5:18; 6:1). Here, the point is that the faithful word is not only “worthy” of consideration, but also “worthy” of whole-hearted acceptance (πάσης ἀποδοχῆς).\(^{62}\)

The faithful saying formula in its shorter or longer form is found nowhere else in the NT, nor is it found in the LXX. In the PD, the formula is used to introduce or conclude a statement the author is eager to stress. While it is sometimes difficult to determine if the formula refers to what comes immediately before or to what comes immediately after, there is general agreement that the reference is forwards in 1 Tim 1:15 and in 2 Tim 2:11, and that it is backwards in Titus 3:8.\(^{63}\)

\(^{57}\) With Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 69.

\(^{58}\) See BDAG, s.v. “πιστὸς”; George W. Knight, III, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979), 7-8. Knight links the phrase πιστὸς ὁ λόγος with the phrase πιστὸς ὁ θεός (1 Cor 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor 1:18) and argues: “When once one realizes that the New Testament speaks of πιστὸς ὁ θεός then other usages of πιστὸς must be seen in that light. The λόγος is πιστὸς because it comes from ὁ θεός who is πιστὸς” (8).

\(^{59}\) BDAG, s.v. “λόγος.”

\(^{60}\) BDAG, s.v. “ἀποδοχή.” See also the list of lexicons and commentaries provided by Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 22-23.

\(^{61}\) BDAG, s.v. “ἀξίος”; Foerster, *TDNT*, s.v. “ἀξίος.”

\(^{62}\) πᾶς is a marker of the highest degree. With Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 28-29, Roloff, *Der Erste Brief an Timotheus*, 95. See also the discussion in Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 397.

\(^{63}\) See, for example, Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 138; Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 56–57; the excursus on the trustworthy sayings in Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 326–330. There are, of course, some who argue otherwise. R. Alastair Campbell, “Identifying the Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” *JSNT* 54 (1994): 73–86, for example, contends that πιστὸς ὁ λόγος always introduces a short summary statement of doctrine that is capable of wide application and
1 Tim 1:15

πιστὸς ὁ λόγος καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἡξίος,

ὅτι Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἀμαρτωλοὺς σώσαι,

ὡς πρῶτος εἰμι ἐγώ.

Trustworthy is the word and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

2 Tim 2:11-13

πιστὸς ὁ λόγος·

ei γὰρ συναπεθάνομεν, καὶ συζήσομεν·

ei ὑπομένομεν, καὶ συμβασιλεύσομεν·

ei ἀρνητόμεθα, κακεῖνος ἀρνήσεται ἡμᾶς·

ei ἀπιστοῦμεν, ἑκεῖνος πιστὸς μένει, ἀρνήσασθαι γὰρ εἰστὶν οὐ δύναται.

Trustworthy is the word: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

Titus 3:4-8

δέ ἡ χριστότης καὶ ἡ φιλανθρωπία ἐπεφάνη τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ,

οὐκ ἔργων τῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἣ ἐποίησαμεν ἡμεῖς ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινίσωσις πνεύματος ἀγίου, οὐ εξέκειαν ἕφ’ ἡμᾶς πλοῦσις διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶσιν τῇ ἑκείνου χάριτι κληρονόμοι γεννηθῶμεν κατ’ ἐλπίδα ἑως αἰώνιον.

Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος·

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works done by us in righteousness, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Trustworthy is the word.

These texts display that the formula can point in either direction, and, as Marshall concludes, “there is legitimate room for dispute” over the other two occurrences.64

Wieland rightly draws attention to the fact that, in at least the majority of cases, the material Paul stresses is soteriological.65 Whether the formula in 1 Tim 4:9 refers backwards66 or forwards,67 the content Paul seeks to emphasize has to do with salvation.

easy recall. But it is unlikely that, rather than the theologically robust content of Titus 3:3-7, Paul intends the phrase ἢνα φροντίζωσιν καλῶν ἔργων προϊστασθαι οἱ πεπιστευκότες θεῷ as the faithful saying (79).  

64 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 328. 
65 Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 34. 
66 LW 28:324; Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 51; Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 177;  
Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 101; Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 1:508;
He draws attention either to godliness as the path of eschatological existence/eternal life (v. 8) or to the Living God as the Savior of all people (v. 10). Since Paul uses πιστὸς ὁ λόγος four times to refer to a salvation statement, the formula in 1 Tim 3:1 likely refers back to 2:15.

1 Tim 4:8-10

η γὰρ σωματικὴ γυμνασία πρὸς ὅλην ἐστὶν ὦφελίμος, ὡδὲ εὐσέβεια πρὸς πάντα ὦφελίμος ἐστὶν ἐπαγγελιὰν ἄμοισα ζωῆς τῆς ὑπὸ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης. πιστὸς ὁ λόγος καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἀξίου.

Eis touto gar kopiawmen kai agwngizomeba, oti hlpikameb eni thei zwn, os esin swthp pantwn anbropwn malista pistwn.

For physical training is beneficial for a little while, but training for the goal of godliness is beneficial for all things, because it holds the promise of life both now and in the future. Trustworthy is the word and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have placed our hope on the Living God, who is the Savior of all people, that is, those who believe.

1 Tim 2:15-3:1

συνήσται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἁγάπῃ καὶ ἁγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης.

πιστὸς ὁ λόγος.

But women will be saved through (good works like) childbearing, provided that they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control. Trustworthy is the word.

In my judgment, then, Frances Young’s conclusion is correct. The faithful saying formula does not signal traditional material in general; rather, it “heralds an assurance of the gospel.” The fact that the opponents are promulgators of an alternative soteriological

Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 105; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 198; Bassler, I Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 84; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 554; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 376–377; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 250; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 308–309; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 93.

67 Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 68; Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 240; Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, 107; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 247, 254; Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 126–127; Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 110–111.

68 Syntactically, v. 8 is perhaps the most likely option. See, for example, Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 554n88. But v. 10 seems to be “more theologically weighty.” See Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, 107. The issue is probably irresolvable.


70 Young, The Theology of the Pastoral Letters, 56. Contra Hanson, The Pastoral Epistles, 64, who concludes that no argument for consistency can be made with respect to
plan, combined with the fact that Paul consistently highlights the untrustworthiness of the opponents—they are by no means πιστός!—suggests that Paul uses some (or possibly all) of the faithful sayings to combat the false teachers. Towner argues: “The ‘trustworthy’ saying formula is a technique by which Paul, in one motion, rearticulates his gospel (and corresponding aspects of teaching), asserts its authenticity and apostolic authority, and alienates the opposing teaching that, by implication (and this is the polemical significance of the πίστις word-group), does not belong to the category denoted by the term πιστός (‘trustworthy’).”

I note that the additional stress on acceptance (καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιος) is found only in 1 Timothy, the letter that is the most polemical of the three.

Verse 10 takes up the thought of v. 8 and introduces new material. γάρ functions here as a marker of clarification or confirmation. The neuter demonstrative pronoun, τοῦτο, which does not agree with the feminine εὐσέβεια, refers back to the entire thought of v. 8b. εἰς expresses the goal; thus, εἰς τοῦτο in v. 10 is synonymous with πρὸς εὐσέβειαν in v. 7. The entire introductory phrase of v. 10 may be translated: “You see, to this end...” Paul completes the thought with two first-person plural verbs, which he uses to emphasize that he and Timothy toil together. κοπιάω is common in the Pauline letters (undisputed: Rom 16:6, 12; 1 Cor 4:12; 15:10; 16:16; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 5:12; disputed: Eph 4:28; Col 1:29; 1 Tim 4:10; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:6). The verb means “to exert oneself.” While Paul can use the term to refer to physical effort (e.g., Eph 4:28), the reference here must be to spiritual (rather than σωματική, v. 8) striving, both in the more general context of Christian existence, and in the more specific context of apostolic faithfulness: “Whatever generalization one likes to make... it will always be found that it cannot apply to all five contexts.”

In keeping with the method I have formulated, I can suggest that three of the four faithful sayings in 1 and 2 Timothy probably combat the opponents (1 Tim 2:15-3:1; 4:8-10; 2 Tim 2:11-13). These three sayings occur in oppositional units, so it is highly likely that the opponents are in view. Since the fourth saying in 1 and 2 Timothy does not occur in an oppositional unit (1 Tim 1:15), we can say only that Paul possibly counters the opponents with this statement.

Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 144–145.

BDAG, s.v. “γάρ.”

With Knight, The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters, 63. See the discussion of other options provided by Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 555; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 309n31.


BDAG, s.v. “κοπιάω.”
ministry. As Spicq points out, “There is no Christian life, no apostolic ministry, without rough, persevering labor.”77 The second verb, ἀγωνίζομαι,78 occurs six times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: 1 Cor 9:25; disputed: Col 1:29; 4:12; 1 Tim 4:10; 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7).79 The verb means “to struggle,” either in the sense of athletic competition or military engagement,80 but the use of γυμνάζω and γυμνασία in vv. 7-8 limit the scene here to the athletic sphere.

Paul and Timothy strive toward godliness because (ὅτι) the Living God is able to fulfill the promise of life that is associated with godliness. The verb ἐλπίζω (“to hope”), here in the perfect tense (see also 1 Cor 15:19; 2 Cor 1:10; 1 Tim 5:5; 6:17), conveys the thought of immutable confidence in someone or something.81 Here, the object is specified: Paul and his delegate are confident in the “Living God” (θεὸς Ἰσσωντι) who is the “Savior of all people” (σωτὴρ ἰσσωντων ἰνδρῶπων). The undisputed Paul uses the title “Living God” three times (Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 3:3; 1 Thess 1:9). The only other reference to the “Living God” in the PD is in 1 Tim 3:15, where Paul writes of “the church of the Living God” (ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ἀνθρώπων). “Church of God” (ἐκκλησία θεοῦ) is a standard Pauline expression (undisputed: 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 2:14; disputed: 2 Thess 1:4; 1 Tim 3:5), but this is the only occurrence of the fuller expression, “church of the Living God.” The prominent point in 1 Timothy is that the one

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77 TLNT, s.v. “κοπιάω.”
78 It is difficult to decide between ὄνειδιζόμεθα (καὸς D L P 0241 vid etc.) and ἀγωνίζόμεθα (καὸς A C F G K etc.). The former is the more difficult reading, but since the latter has slightly better attestation, and since athletic imagery runs throughout the passage, it is most likely the original reading. See Elliott, The Greek Text of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, 68; Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 574; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 250.
79 Regarding the relationship between 1 Tim 4:10 and Col 1:29, Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 247, claims “Versteht man V10 als paraphrasierende Erinnerung an Kol 1,29;” thus, we have here a piece of tradition. But Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 555, is right to point out that only the general thought is similar: “The language, however, is not so close and shows clear signs of the author’s own style.”
“Living God” brings eschatological existence/eternal life to all who believe the apostolic gospel, and he gathers all believers into his one church.\textsuperscript{82}

Paul next refers to God as the “Savior” (σωτήρ). While σωτήρ can simply mean “a generous benefactor,”\textsuperscript{83} it is highly unlikely that Paul uses the term this way here. The title σωτήρ occurs ten times in the PD (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; 2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6), six times in reference to God the Father (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). Paul uses σωτήρ of the Father to indicate that the first person of the Trinity is the Great Architect of the redemptive arrangement, the plan the opponents are attempting to redesign (1 Tim 1:4).\textsuperscript{84} In 1 Tim 2:3-4, it is the Father “who desires all people (πάντας ἀνθρώπους) to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Moreover, according to Titus 3:4-6, the Father saves his church by pouring out the Holy Spirit, who is given through the Son. Here in 1 Tim 4:10, Paul indicates that the Father is the Savior of all who believe. The Father is not merely concerned for the salvation of all people (ὥς πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἠλλήναι, 2:4); he provides salvation for all people (ὥς ἐστιν σωτήρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων, 4:10), though Paul immediately clarifies—μάλιστα πιστῶν.

\textsuperscript{82} See the discussion of the designation “Living God” in Wieland, \textit{The Significance of Salvation}, 91-95.

\textsuperscript{83} Steven M. Baugh, “‘Savior of All People’: 1 Tim 4:10 in Context,” \textit{WTJ} 54 (1992): 334. Baugh argues further: “There simply cannot be any doubt that this was the usual meaning of this word outside of the NT.” Calvin writes: “For here σωτήρ is a general term, meaning one who guards and preserves. [Paul’s] argument is that God’s kindness extends to all men” (Comm. 1 Tim 4:10).

\textsuperscript{84} See the discussion in Young, \textit{The Theology of the Pastoral Letters}, 54; Sumney, “God Our Savior,” 105-123; “The central identification of God as Savior grounds the rejection of the false teachers” (123); Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus}, 310–311; Greg A. Couser, “The Sovereign Savior of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus,” in \textit{Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul’s Theology in the Pastoral Epistles}, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 107–124. The concept of the Father as Architect or Originator of the redemptive arrangement is prominent in the PD, especially in 1 Timothy. The idea surfaces even where the title σωτήρ is not used of the Father. For example, in his exegetical analysis of the creed contained in 1 Tim 3:16, Trebilco concludes: “The use of the divine passive in clause one—hos ephanerōthē en sarki—reminds us that the action of the verb was undertaken by God the Father… The incarnation is rooted in the will and activity of the Father; he was the originator of the story told by the creed, and hence of the way of revelation and salvation.” Paul Trebilco, “1 Timothy 3.16 as a Proto-Rule of Faith,” in \textit{Ears That Hear: Explorations in Theological Interpretation of the Bible}, ed. Joel B. Green and Tim Meadowcroft (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 183.
μάλιστα occurs five times in the PD (1 Tim 4:10; 5:8, 17; 2 Tim 4:13; Titus 1:10); each time it means “namely” or “that is.”\textsuperscript{85} πιστός and its cognates are unusually common in these letters.\textsuperscript{86} The noun πίστις refers regularly to objective content (1 Tim 1:19; 3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8, 12; 6:10, 12, 21; 2 Tim 1:5; 2:18; 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:13; 2:2). Given the prominence of this particular usage of πίστις, it is likely that Paul uses ὁ πιστός for those who have faith and accept or live in accordance with the faith.\textsuperscript{87} The reference here is to “the faithful,” those who walk the path of godliness. Thus, the phrase μάλιστα πιστῶν establishes an important demarcation with respect to the Father’s soteriological provision. While the scope of the Father’s concern is universal (1 Tim 2:4), the salvation provided by the “Living God” and “Savior” is appropriated by genuine faith, faith that perseveres on the path of godliness. In sum, Paul and Timothy toil together on this path of godliness, knowing that it is the God-ordained route of eschatological existence.

E. Summary and Reflection

This passage contains important data about how Timothy is to respond to the opponents. Timothy is pictured here as both a good servant of Christ and a champion of Pauline teaching. The delegate has set his mind on the “good teaching,” the body of Christian doctrine with the gospel at the core, and he must continue to be nourished by this teaching. Additionally, Timothy must commend (ὑποτίθημι) good teaching, such as Paul’s interpretation of the creation account, to the congregation in Ephesus (v. 6). Continuing in the good teaching involves repudiation of the opponents’ teaching (παραπτέομαι, v. 7a). Again glancing ahead to 2 Tim 2:18, I have suggested that, though the opponents likely advocated a spiritual experience that could be enjoyed presently in what they considered to be the eternal age, Paul refers to their practices as bodily training of a temporary nature (v. 8a). In the face of competing claims, Paul underscores the fact that the ongoing translation of the apostolic gospel into works that please God (“godliness”) is the true path of eschatological existence (v. 8b). For this reason, Timothy is to “exercise” (γυμνάζω) for the goal of “godliness” (εὐσέβεια, v. 7b). The pericope

\textsuperscript{85} Skeat, “‘Especially the Parchments’” 173–177.

\textsuperscript{86} A total of fifty-seven occurrences: πιστός occurs seventeen times; πίστις occurs thirty-three times; πιστεύω occurs six times; πιστῶ occurs one time. See the discussion in Marshall, “Faith and Works in the Pastoral Epistles,” 203–218; Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 121–129; Trebilco, “What Shall We Call Each Other? Part One,” 255–256.

\textsuperscript{87} Trebilco, “What Shall We Call Each Other? Part One,” 255–256.
concludes with an emphasis on the “Living God” and “Savior” as the one who is powerful to fulfill the promise of life that accompanies godliness (v. 10). Paul and his delegate toil together with an immutable confidence in this God, the Great Architect of the redemptive plan, the very plan the opponents attempt to rearrange (1 Tim 1:4).

This passage also reveals something of a literary strategy on Paul’s part. I have noted that, in at least the majority of cases, the faithful saying formula is used to stress soteriological material. The fact that the opponents are promulgators of an alternative soteriological arrangement, combined with the fact that Paul consistently underscores the untrustworthiness of the opponents, suggests that Paul intends at least some of the faithful sayings to be quick but sharp blows to the opponents (probably 1 Tim 2:15-3:1; 4:8-10; 2 Tim 2:11-13). These sayings herald an assurance of the apostolic gospel and cast doubt on the false teaching.

Finally, this unit provides us with some new information about the opponents’ ideology. I have suggested that Paul’s use of μῦθος reveals basic but important facts about the false teaching. I have argued that the opponents’ “myths” are connected to an alternative soteriological arrangement and that the “myths” have behavioral implications. From 1 Tim 1:3-7, we can conclude that it is most likely the opponents’ imaginative reading of the OT that Paul classifies as “myths.” Based on connections between 1 Tim 6:20-21a and 2 Tim 2:18, we can suggest that the opponents thought they had been projected into the age to come and therefore claimed a special knowledge. As possessors of this knowledge, they perhaps thought they could see things in the law that others were unable to see. While the points about eschatology and knowledge must remain tentative until we examine 2 Tim 2:14-26, it seems most probable that the opponents’ mythology, that is, their soteriological arrangement with behavioral implications, was either based upon or found support in their reading of the law. Since much of the opponents’ teaching uncovered in the letter thus far appears to be best explained as a distortion of Pauline doctrine, we can suggest, though we can do no more than this at present, that the opponents based their teaching on Paul’s words and then attempted to find further justification for their claims in the law.
II. The Problem of the Younger Widows (1 Tim 5:9-16)

First Timothy 5:9-16 is part of the larger unit, 5:3-16. But implicit language is contained only in vv. 9-16, so we will limit ourselves to this subsection. This passage is an early attestation to a special group within the church known as “widows” (χήρα; see also Ign. Pol. 4.1; Pol. Phil. 4.3). While many interpreters claim that Paul here refers to an ecclesiastical office, “widows of the congregation,” it is more likely that Paul has in mind a group of saints worthy of special provision. Bonnie Thurston finds four key points in favor of an ecclesiastical office. 1) Widows are especially close (contextually) to elders (5:17-19), and they receive about as much attention as the bishop (3:1-7). 2) τίμα in 5:3 can mean “pay” or “compensation.” 3) καταλέγω in 5:9 is a technical term, used for registration of levied troops. 4) The phrase “the first faith” in 5:12 refers to an initial oath of celibacy; the widow engaged herself wholly to the Church.

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88 See Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 54–60, for a discussion of boundaries and unity.

89 Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 74. See also Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 426–430; Bonnie Thurston, “1 Timothy 5.3-16 and Leadership of Women in the Early Church,” in A Feminist Companion to the Deutero-Pauline Epistles, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Bickenstaff (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 166–167; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 104–105. Verner, The Household of God, 161–166, finds three distinct sections: vv. 3-8, vv. 9-15, and v. 16. He suggests that, while in vv. 3-8 and in v. 16 the author’s concern is for the church’s social responsibility for the group known as widows, in vv. 9-15 the author speaks about the office of widows. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Structured Ministry of the Church in the Pastoral Epistles,” CBQ 66 (2004): 587-593, includes the χήρα with the ἐπίσκοπος, the πρεσβύτερος, and the διάκονος; these are the four groups of “structured ministry envisaged in the Pastoral Epistles” (592). Fitzmyer, however, is more cautious than most, claiming that the function of widows in the community is not explained (593).

90 With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 119; Young, The Theology of the Pastoral Letters, 114–120; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 575–577; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 286; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 271; David G. Horrell, “Disciplining Performance and ‘Placing’ the Church: Widows, Elders and Slaves in the Household of God (1 Tim 5,1-6,2),” in 1 Timothy Reconsidered, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peeters, 2008), 120–121. Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 286, claims that widows constitute a Stand; they form an institutionalized group with conditions of entry and a pattern of life. They do not, however, constitute an Amt, an office for which certain functions would be appropriate.

91 Thurston, “1 Timothy 5.3-16 and Leadership of Women in the Early Church,” 166–167.
Thurston’s first point is moot. The fact that widows are in close proximity to elders does not suggest that both are offices. The argument of proximity would be much stronger if the ἐπίσκοπος and the διάκονος were discussed in chapter five, rather than in chapter three. Also, the length of the section cannot be taken as an indicator that an office is in view, for female deacons are addressed only in 3:11. Problems arise as well as we proceed to Thurston’s second point. The verb τιµάω occurs only twice in the Pauline corpus (Eph 6:2; 1 Tim 5:3), and in Eph 6:2 the term definitely does not refer to compensation (τίµα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα). While it is true that Paul uses the noun τιµή to refer to the payment of elders (1 Tim 5:17), Paul also uses the noun in 1 Tim 6:1, and it is highly unlikely that the point in 6:1 is that slaves are to consider their masters worthy of all payment. In the exegetical analysis below, I will demonstrate that Thurston’s final two points are also flawed.

It does not seem that Paul’s concern in this passage is “to limit a particular leadership ministry for women in the church.” His concern, rather, is to outline both the widow who is eligible for community economic support and the widow who is not eligible for such support. I will offer only brief comments on the widows who are eligible for support and the family’s role in caring for widows (vv. 9-10, 16). This will ensure that we understand the context. I will argue at length that the widows who are not eligible for support are those who are involved with the false teachers in Ephesus (vv. 11-15).

A. Older Widows with Good Reputations Are Eligible for Community Economic Support (vv. 9-10)

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92 Additionally, Kartzow, Gossip and Gender, 142, points out three important differences between this list for widows and the lists for elders and deacons: 1) this list includes clear criteria for rejection, 2) here, a distinction is drawn between “true” and “false” widows, and 3) this list includes a clear age requirement.

93 It could also be argued that the discussion of widows is closely linked with the brief discussion of older men, younger men, older women, and younger women. Thus, in 5:1-16, the issue is how Timothy is to interact with different groups within the Christian community.


95 Thurston, “1 Timothy 5.3-16 and Leadership of Women in the Early Church,” 159, emphasis added.
In this section, the χήρα is the center of attention. The noun χήρα occurs abundantly in the LXX, and often in the Gospels, but outside this pericope the term is used only once in the Pauline letters (1 Cor 7:8, in the context of marital questions). The word refers generally to a woman living without a husband.96 Kartzow explains, “This term could cover a wide spectrum of women in ancient texts: virgins, women living apart from their husbands, divorced women, and women whose husbands were dead.”97 As Quinn and Wacker point out, the woman living without a husband “was in antiquity a veritable paradigm for the helpless and oppressed. Ancient law recognized and enforced the husband’s duty to provide for and to protect his wife and family. Thus a woman had legal protection only through her father and then through her husband.”98 Malherbe estimates that up to thirty percent of the female population were widows.99 Paul does not here introduce some new responsibility.100 From the earliest days, caring for widows was a responsibility of the people of God (e.g., Deut 10:18-19; 24:17-18; Acts 6:1). Paul seeks to limit an already existing practice: he restricts the church’s charity toward the χήρα. The verb καταλέγω means “to be elected into a fellowship.”101 The term is a NT hapax, though it occurs often in Hellenistic literature, and in a wide range of contexts (e.g., Herodotus, Persian Wars 1.59; 7.1; Plutarch, Life of Pompey 13.7; Philo, Decal. 29; Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 416, line 4).102 καταλέγω reveals only that the Christian community in Ephesus had an official list of widows.103 The term does not aid

96 BDAG, s.v. “χήρα”; Stählin, TDNT, s.v. “χήρα.”
98 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 427.
101 Stählin, TDNT, s.v. “χήρα”; BDAG, s.v. “καταλέγω.” See also Kartzow, Gossip and Gender, 145-146; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 104.
102 See the additional references in Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 75; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 264.
103 With Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 264; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 345; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 104.
in the identification of widows, either as an office or as a group worthy of special provision. However, the criteria for inclusion in the fellowship clarify this matter.

Three criteria are given. First, for a woman to be included in the fellowship of widows, she must be at least sixty years old (μὴ ἔλαττον ἔτων ἔξηκοντα γεγονύια). Pietersen explains that this was “the recognized age in antiquity when one was classified as ‘old’ and correspondingly less likely to remarry.” In light of this first criterion, it is unlikely that we have here an ecclesiastical office, for it would be unrealistic to place a set of official duties on women of this age in antiquity. The second criterion has to do with marriage: a widow must be “a one-man woman” (ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή). It is difficult to decide whether this means that the woman must have been faithful in marriage, or whether it means that she must only have been married once. The customary honoring of women who had been univira/μόνανδρος makes the latter option possible. But Paul’s instruction in v. 14 (Βούλομαι οὖν νεωτέρας γαμεῖν) makes the former option preferable. Third, a widow must be well known for good works (ἐν ἔργοις καλῶς μαρτυρουμένη). As

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105 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 578.


107 See Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 75; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 223; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge, 231–233; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 593–594; Horrell, “Disciplining Performance and ‘Placing’ the Church,” 119; and especially Sydney H.T. Page, “Marital Expectations of Church Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles,” JSNT 50 (1993): 105–120. Page focuses on the phrase μῖᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνδρα/ἀνήρ (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6) and discusses a number of interpretive options. 1) Some interpret the phrase as a requirement: all aspirants to the offices must be married. This interpretation fails to do justice to the term μῖᾶς. 2) Some interpret the phrase as a prohibition of polygamy. This is highly unlikely, however, since monogamy was the norm in the Greco-Roman world. 3) Some argue that the phrase was intended to exclude from positions of leadership those who had remarried after a divorce. But this interpretation stands in tension with those NT texts that seem to allow for divorce under certain circumstances (e.g., Matt 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor 7:15). 4) Some suggest that the phrase was intended to exclude those who had remarried after a divorce or the death of a spouse. This interpretation is problematic because Paul elsewhere explicitly allows widows to remarry (Rom 7:2-3; 1 Cor 7:39). Page concludes that the best option is to understand the phrase μῖᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνδρα/ἀνήρ as a reference to marital fidelity. We may conclude the same of the correlative expression, ἐν ὦς ἄνδρος γυνή.
he was in 1 Tim 2:9-10 (ἔργων ἀγαθῶν), Paul is concerned that Christian women have a testimony of God-pleasing deeds that flow from genuine faith in Christ.

That this testimony is the chief criterion is evidenced by the fact that Paul immediately provides four examples of “good works.” The verb τεκνοτροφέω, which occurs only here in the NT, refers to the process of raising children (Epictetus, Disc. 1.23.3). In this context, the term has connotations of both physical and spiritual care. The aorist tense of the verb suggests a historical reflection; when the widow was married, she performed honorably the duties of motherhood. The fact that bringing up children is here included among the “good works” of the widow lends weight to my interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15. Hospitality (ξενοδοχέω) is the next example from the category of God-pleasing deeds. The opening up of one’s home to travelling Christians was an important element of the early Christian mission (see also 1 Tim 3:2). Next, Paul mentions the washing of the feet of the saints (ἐἰ άγλων πόδας ἔνιψεν), a concrete example of hospitality and humility. Widows worthy of special provision are those who have stooped to even the most menial of tasks in the church. Finally, Paul references the habit of helping those in trouble (ἐἰ θλίβομένοις ἐπήρχεσεν). ἐπαρχέω (1 Tim 5:10, 16; 1 Macc 8:26; 11:35) denotes the sort of assistance that would be appropriate in the case of oppression. The passive participle of ἐπάλω may refer to people suffering from destitution or

108 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 595, rightly points out that this is not a checklist; rather, these are simply examples of the kind of deeds that should be practiced. If it were a checklist, and if the first εἰ clause is understood as a reference to the widow’s own children, then widows who never had children would be excluded.

109 BDAG, s.v. “τεκνοτροφέω.”

110 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 265; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 347. It is possible that orphan care is in view here as well, especially since the other examples in the list are concerned with service to other people. See the discussion in Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 116–117; Spicq, Les Étires Pastorales, 1:534; Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 75; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 595.

111 See the discussion in chapter three.

112 See TLNT, s.v. “ξενοδοχέω.”

113 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 97; Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 75.

114 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 597. Calvin suggests that foot washing is a synecdoce; Paul means all the services normally rendered to the saints (Comm. 1 Tim 5:10). Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 265, also favors this interpretation.

115 BDAG, s.v. “ἐπαρχέω.”
persecution. Paul concludes v. 10 with a generalizing statement: “if she has applied herself to every good work” (ἐὰν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ ἐπηχολούθησεν). Calvin captures the point: “only those women who have excellent reports of the whole of their past life” should be included in the fellowship of widows.

Before proceeding to v. 11, I note that v. 10 contains only aorist verbs (ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν, ἐξενοδόχησεν, ἐνιψεν, ἐπήρκεσεν, ἐπηχολούθησεν). The list focuses on what widows have done in the past; the focus is not capacities for leadership or service in the present. The aorist verbs, combined with an age restriction that would have made official duties unrealistic, leads me to conclude that this passage does not deal with an ecclesiastical office. “Widows,” or more precisely, “true widows” (5:3), are women within the congregation who are eligible for church economic support.

B. Younger Widows with Bad Reputations Are Not Eligible for Community Economic Support (vv. 11-15)

In vv. 11-15, it becomes clear why Paul seeks to restrict the church’s charity toward the χήρα. The problem was not that the fellowship of widows had grown too large for the church to support. The clear impression is that the Christian community in Ephesus did not lack resources (1 Tim 2:9-10; 6:6-10, 17-19). The problem, rather, was that the circle of church-supported widows had enlarged to include some younger women whom Paul did not find worthy of support. The greater concern of the pericope surfaces in vv. 11-15.

1. The Church Must Not Support the Younger Widows (vv. 11-13)

Where Timothy is to enroll the type of widow described in vv. 9-10, he is to ensure that no church financial support is offered to the sort of widow discussed in vv. 11-13. Once again, Paul mentions age, marriage, and reputation. The “younger widows” (νεωτέρας χήρας) in Ephesus are to be dismissed (παραιτέομαι, see also 1 Tim 4:7 above)

116 BDAG, s.v. “θλίβω.”
117 Calvin, Comm. 1 Tim 5:10.
120 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 119. Fee also claims that the true widows are set up as an ideal in contrast to the young widows in the same way that Timothy is often set in contrast to the false teachers (114).
as unworthy candidates of community economic support. While the adjective νέος simply means “new” or “young,” the reference here is to women who are under the age of sixty (v. 10).

Paul provides the reason (γάρ) for the refusal of these younger widows: “for when they live sensually against Christ, they desire to marry.” καταστρηνιάω is unattested elsewhere. The simplex verb στρηνιάω refers to living luxuriously or sensually (Rev 18:7, 9), and the preposition κατά probably adds a component of conflict (“against”). In this case, the conflict is clearly with Christ (τοῦ Χριστοῦ). The basic idea is that the younger widows experience sexual desire that is somehow in conflict with their commitment to Christ. It is explicitly said that this sexual drive leads them “to desire marriage” (γαμεῖν θέλουσιν), so the issue is not that the younger widows have fallen into sexual immorality. The problem of promiscuity, which surfaced briefly in 1 Tim 2:9-10, does not seem to be present here. It appears that the marriage itself is the problem.

The decision to marry, Paul says in v. 12, would bring condemnation (κρίμα, see also 1 Tim 3:6) on these women. χρίμα refers to the righteous judgment of God, who repays all men and women according to their works (e.g., Rom 2:2). Paul adds an important, yet somewhat cryptic, clause: these women incur judgment “because they declare invalid their first faith” (ὅτι τὴν πρώτην πίστιν ἠθέτησαν). Many interpreters take πίστις here as a “vow” or a “pledge to widowhood.” David Horrell suggests: “Most

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121 BDAG, s.v. “νέος.”
122 Schneider, TDNT, s.v. “καταστρηνιάω,” is incorrect; the word does not occur in the LXX.
123 BDAG, s.v. “στρηνιάω.”
124 BDF §181.
125 This is the most likely sense here, for it is less clear how living luxuriously might lead to the desire for marriage.
126 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 441: “They want to remarry whenever they feel attractions that are incompatible with their commitment to Christ.”
127 With Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 599.
128 Büchsel, TDNT, s.v. “χρίμα.” Contra Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 266, who says that “the court of public reputation” is in view here. Since Paul has just indicated that the widows’ desires are “against Christ,” it is more likely that divine judgment is intended.
likely is the idea that enrollment as a widow involves a pledge or oath not to remarry (i.e., of celibacy) and instead to be devoted to and dependent on the church, which is also a particular form of dedication to Christ. This would explain why sexual desire and the wish to marry is said to be “against Christ.” However, there are at least three major difficulties with this interpretation. First, it requires an exceptional (in the PD) use of πίστις. Second, it does not explain adequately the adjective πρῶτος. Why would the pledge of widowhood, which would certainly come after the pledge to follow Christ, be considered “first”? Third, in v. 14, Paul encourages younger widows to remarry. There appears to be little room, then, for an oath of celibacy. Thus, it is more likely that πίστις here refers to the posture of belief in Christ.

πίστις is the object of the verb ἀθετέω, which occurs six times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: 1 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:21; 3:15; twice in 1 Thess 4:8; disputed: 1 Tim 5:12). In 1 Thess 4:8, the term refers to the setting aside or disregarding of ethical instructions. But in both Gal 2:21 and 3:15 Paul uses the verb with the more specific meaning of annulment: “I do not nullify the grace of God” (Oυκ ἀθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ) and “even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified” (διὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κεκυρωμένην διαθήκην οὐδεὶς ἀθετεῖ ή ἐπιδιατάσσεται). Probably, the idea here in 1 Tim 5:12 is that, by making the decision to marry, the widow would show her faith to be inauthentic. But how can it be said that marrying declares invalid a widow’s faith? The solution that best accounts for the strong language of vv. 11-12 is that Paul is thinking of intermarriage: some younger widows who professed Christ were...

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130 Horrell, “Disciplining Performance and ‘Placing’ the Church,” 121.
131 See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:5 in chapter two and 1 Tim 4:10 above.
132 See LW 28:344; Calvin, Comm. 1 Tim 5:12.
133 Ulrike Wagener, Die Ordnung des “Hauses Gottes”: Der Ort von Frauen in der Ekklesiologie und Ethik der Pastoralbriefe, WUNT 2.65 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 200–201, proposes that two groups of widows could be in view: one group that had taken the oath not to remarry (vv. 11-12) and one group that had not taken the oath (v. 14). While this is possible, it is an unnecessarily complicated solution to the problem.
134 With LW 28:344; Calvin, Comm. 1 Tim 5:12; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 121–122; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 580, 600; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 291–292; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 352.
seeking to marry unbelievers.\textsuperscript{135} In keeping with 1 Cor 7:39,\textsuperscript{136} Paul here expresses his complete disapproval of mixed marriages. When a woman in the ancient world married, she “renounced her father’s religion and worshiped instead at her husband’s hearth.”\textsuperscript{137} Plutarch writes: “A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband’s friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions” (\textit{Mor.} 2.140). Marrying an unbelieving husband, and adopting his pagan religion, would show that the widow’s “first faith,” her commitment to Christ, was not genuine. For Paul, authentic faith is faith that stands the test of time, persevering through the avenue of good works.\textsuperscript{138}

In v. 13, Paul makes an additional argument against the enrollment of younger widows. The verse begins with ἅμα δὲ καὶ (see also Phlm 22). ἅμα is a marker of simultaneous occurrence; the actions of vv. 11-12 and v. 13 coincide.\textsuperscript{139} The question is whether the actions are carried out by one or by two groups. Marshall and Towner suggest that two groups of younger widows are pictured.\textsuperscript{140} The force, then, would be: “At the same time that certain younger widows desire to marry unbelievers, other younger widows are learning to be lazy.” While this interpretation is possible, it seems unlikely. Paul provides no clear hint that he is here introducing a new group. He presents in v. 11 the one group, νεωτέρας χήρας, and he here uses only the third-person plural form of the verb μανθάνω. The unstated subject of the verb is the one group that has been the focus of the discussion since v. 11. The better translation of the first part of v. 13 is, “At the same time also \textit{they} (the one group of younger widows) learn to be lazy.”\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{135} With Fee, \textit{1 and 2 Timothy, Titus}, 121; Marshall, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 600–601; Mounce, \textit{Pastoral Epistles}, 291; Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus}, 352.

\textsuperscript{136} For the view that marriage between an unbeliever and a believer is forbidden by Paul in 1 Cor 7 (including, but not limited to, the phrase μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ in v. 39), see Thiselton, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 604. Thiselton writes: “To marry an unbeliever would indeed be to invite a pull in two directions and a lack of unified vision.”

\textsuperscript{137} Joel B. Green, \textit{1 Peter}, THNTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 92.

\textsuperscript{138} See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:5 in chapter two and 1 Tim 2:15 in chapter three.

\textsuperscript{139} BDAG, s.v. “ἅμα.”

\textsuperscript{140} Marshall, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 601; Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus}, 352–353.

\textsuperscript{141} Also Mounce, \textit{Pastoral Epistles}, 292; Johnson, \textit{The First and Second Letters to Timothy}, 267.
The verb μηχανθάω is used of women in 1 Tim 2:11 and in 2 Tim 3:7. The construction here is difficult in that the verb is followed not by an infinitive but by the adjective ἀργός. The simplest solution is to supply εἶναι to complete the thought. ἀργός is used eight times in the NT (Matt 12:36; 20:3, 6; twice in 1 Tim 5:13; Titus 1:12; Jas 2:20; 2 Pet 1:8). It can mean “idle,” “lazy,” or “useless.” Kartzow comments: “[The widows] are learning to be idle, a rather strange thing to learn, since being idle or doing nothing does not need much education.” The point probably is that these widows have acquired a habit of laziness with respect to the Christian profession. The participial phrase, περιερχόμεναι τὰς οἰκίας (“going about the houses”), clarifies the meaning of ἀργός. The issue is not that these women are inactive; the issue is that, though they travel from house to house, they do nothing for the benefit of the inhabitants.

The phrase οὐ μόνον δὲ… ἀλλὰ καί… introduces an even more troubling aspect of the situation. Paul now describes the younger widows as φλύαρος and περίεργος. The first adjective occurs only here in the NT and only in 4 Macc 5:11 in the LXX. The term appears to mean “gossipy” or “talkative.” The second adjective, περίεργος, means “curious,” and, though it can refer more specifically to curiosity in connection with the practice of magic (Acts 19:19), there is nothing in the immediate context to suggest such a meaning here. In fact, as Roloff points out: “Hier kommt nur die erste Bedeutung in

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142 BDAG, s.v. “ἀργός.”
143 Kartzow, Gossip and Gender, 147.
145 I have argued that the χήρα is not an ecclesiastical office. Thus, while the phrase περιερχόμεναι τὰς οἰκίας may refer to the house churches in Ephesus (Treblco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 510), there is no good reason to conclude that “pastoral” or “official house calls” are in view. Contra Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 118; Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 75; Hanson, The Pastoral Epistles, 99; Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 297; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge, 239; Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 187.
146 BDAG, s.v. “φλύαρος.” See the additional references in TLNT, s.v. “φλύαρος.”
147 BDAG, s.v. “περίεργος.”
148 Contra Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 118; Hanson, The Pastoral Epistles, 99; Pietersen, “Women as Gossips and Busybodies,” 26–27. Kartzow, Gossip and Gender, 149–155, offers a detailed discussion of the term. She concludes: “Rather than establishing two distinct meanings of periergos, it is perhaps more productive to understand the term on a scale that starts with curiosity and ends up with superstition” (151).
Frase wegen der Verbindung mit φλύαροι." A closing participial phrase completes the description: “saying things which ought not to be said” (λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα; compare Titus 1:11). Whether λαλέω refers merely to talking or to teaching in a formal sense, these widows are promoting a message that Paul finds objectionable. As Luther says, “There are two sins involved here: picking up new doctrines… and planting that poison.”

Can we be more precise about the poison? What exactly are these “things which ought not to be said”? If we glance ahead to v. 15, we notice that Paul affiliates some of the younger widows with Satan. This suggests that the widows are somehow promulgating the doctrines of the opponents, which Paul has already classified as Satanic/demonic (1 Tim 4:1). If these younger widows were, prior to Paul’s writing, included in the circle of church-supported widows, then it appears that the Christian community in Ephesus was unintentionally funding false teaching. This perhaps accounts for the fact that widows receive so much attention in 1 Timothy: over ten percent of the letter’s total content is devoted to limiting the church’s charity toward the χήρα. If we recall vv. 11-12, however, a quandary presents itself. The younger widows desire marriage (γαμεῖν θέλουσιν, v. 11), but the opponents forbid marriage (κωλύοντων γαμεῖν, 1 Tim 4:3). How might we explain this?

This quandary has not been given sufficient attention by the commentators. Mounce dismisses the issue rather quickly: “The widow’s desire to remarry is interesting in light of the opponents’ disregard of marriage (cf. 1 Tim 4:3) and the fact that the opponents have probably secured a following among the widows (cf. 2 Tim 3:6). This

149 Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 297n382.
150 See, for example, Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 603: “Their conversation is promoting false teaching in a less formal, but equally destructive manner.”
151 See, for example, Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 510: “While the Pastor does not explicitly say that they are ‘teaching,’ this seems the most likely interpretation of 1 Tim 5:13.”
152 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 119, states that the occurrence of λαλέω here “demonstrates the educational potential of all speech.”
153 LW 28:344.
154 The association of some with Satan could possibly refer to the desire to marry unbelievers, but even if some widows had already acted on this desire, there is no good reason to equate the adoption of the husband’s religion with the promulgation of it. Therefore, this interpretation of τινες ἔξετατράπησαν ὁπίσω τοῦ σατανᾶ (v. 15) does not mesh well with λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα (v. 13).
suggests that the Ephesian heresy was not a well-formulated doctrine but rather a collection of loosely associated ideas without internal consistency.”

My provisional assessment of the opponents is that their doctrine was at least fairly developed and cogent. I have proposed that their eschatological misconception, asceticism, knowledge, and imaginative reading of the law (mythology) are all connected. Moreover, it is clear that the opponents had gained a following in Ephesus, so their teaching must have been at least superficially plausible. Thus, Mounce’s conclusion seems to be inconsistent with the evidence. Marshall is more on track, though he as well has relatively little to say. “The desire to (re)marry (v. 11) may seem to be incompatible with the heresy reflected in 4.3, but, human nature being what it is, it would not be surprising if adherents to other aspects of the heresy eventually found the sexual urge too strong for them.”

But given the likelihood that the opponents claimed that marriage and motherhood somehow endangered a woman’s salvation, perhaps because they considered these to be inappropriate actions for a woman “in the resurrection,” it is reasonable to conclude that the decision to marry would have been a breach severe enough to warrant exclusion from the opponents’ group.

I read vv. 11-15 as follows. The association of the younger widows with Satan (v. 15), combined with the reference to the widows “saying what ought not to be said” (v. 13), means that these women are promulgating the deviant doctrine of the opponents. Regarding vv. 11-12, I note that it is by no means clear that the younger widows have already married unbelievers. Since in v. 14 Paul urges the widows to marry, we may presume that they have the desire to marry but have not yet acted on the desire. It seems, then, that we have in vv. 11-15 a complex picture of a critical moment. The younger widows have three choices. 1) They can disregard their desire to marry, stay committed to the opponents’ teaching, and continue to side with Satan (v. 15). 2) They can act on their desire to marry unbelievers and, as a result, break from the opponents’ group, while still bringing condemnation on themselves (vv. 11-12). 3) They can marry believers, break from the opponents’ group, and return to God-pleasing works in their homes (v. 14).

2. The Household is a Stronghold for Christian Women (vv. 14-15)

Paul deals with the problem of the younger widows by once again (1 Tim 2:15) endorsing the traditional female role in the household. Although the adjective νεωτέρας is

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156 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 290–291.
158 See the discussion of 1 Tim 2:15 in chapter three.
not here accompanied by the noun χήρας (compare 2:11), the repetition of the noun throughout the pericope (2:3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 16) indicates that Paul is not simply exhorting younger women in general, but younger widows.\textsuperscript{159} The verb βούλομαι is used to issue a strong directive (see also 1 Tim 2:8).\textsuperscript{160} First, Paul directs the younger widows “to marry” (γαμέω). Next and naturally, Paul directs these women “to bear children.” The biblical hapax τεκνογονέω corresponds exactly to the noun τεκνογονία (1 Tim 2:15).\textsuperscript{161} Third, the younger widows are told “to manage house.” The verb οἰκοδεσποτέω occurs only here in the NT, and the term is never used in the LXX. The corresponding noun is οἰκοδεσπότης, which occurs twelve times in the Gospels (Matt 10:25; 13:27, 52; 20:1, 11; 21:33; 24:43; Mark 14:14; Luke 12:39; 13:25; 14:21; 22:11; see also Philo, Somn. 1.149; Epictetus, Disc. 3.22.4). The noun denotes the household master, and the verb denotes the action of “managing,” “controlling,” or “ruling” the οἶκος.\textsuperscript{162} It is clear that Paul wishes the young widows to devote their time and energy to family life and domestic matters.\textsuperscript{163}

Paul next explains the benefit of such a course of action. By reintegrating themselves into the structure and activities of the traditional household, the widows will “give the adversary no opportunity” (μηδεμίαν ἄφορμην διδόναι τῷ ἀντικειμένῳ). Paul uses the verb ἀντίκειμαι in 1 Tim 1:10 to associate the opponents with the wicked individuals of his vice list. The masculine singular participle here in 1 Tim 5:14 could be a collective reference to the false teachers, but Paul elsewhere uses a plural participle to refer to human opponents (1 Cor 16:9; Phil 1:28). Another option is that a single human false teacher is in view. However, having in the large majority of the letter referred to the false teachers as a group,\textsuperscript{164} it seems unlikely that Paul now thinks of one false teacher in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{159} Lock, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 61, suggests that the reference is to the younger widows, “though, perhaps, not limited to them.”
  \item \textsuperscript{160} Schrenk, \textit{TDNT}, s.v. “βούλομαι”: “ordering by apostolic authority.”
  \item \textsuperscript{161} BDAG, s.v. “τεκνογονέω”; Johnson, \textit{The First and Second Letters to Timothy}, 267.
  \item \textsuperscript{162} Rengstorf, \textit{TDNT}, s.v. “οἰκοδεσπότης.” In 1 Tim 3:4, we read that the husband is “to lead his own household well” (τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον). Mounce, \textit{Pastoral Epistles}, 296, rightly points out that the balance between the wife’s responsibility of managing the home and the husband’s responsibility of leading the home is not clarified.
  \item \textsuperscript{163} Knight, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 228: “Paul encourages young widows to… enter fully into family life.”
  \item \textsuperscript{164} The one exception is 1 Tim 1:20, but there the individuals are named, and they are used as an example of how to deal with the larger group of opponents in Ephesus.
\end{itemize}
particular. The reference to Satan in v. 15 makes it more likely that he is the adversary Paul here has in mind.\textsuperscript{165}

Verse 14 ends with a prepositional phrase that clarifies the positive outcome: Satan will have no opportunity “for the sake of reviling.”\textsuperscript{166} λοιδορία is abusive or insulting speech (see also 1 Pet 3:9).\textsuperscript{167} The thought is either of slander, which is carried out through human instrumentality,\textsuperscript{168} or of Satan himself as “the accuser of [the] brothers” (Rev 12:10). The context supports the latter. As the younger widows separate from the opponents’ group and return to the path of good works (v. 14), they will demonstrate that their faith (v. 12) is genuine; consequently, Satan will have no occasion to bring charges against them (compare Rom 8:31-39). In v. 15, Paul is clear that some widows have already (ἤδη) turned toward Satan (ἐξετράπησαν ὑπίσω τοῦ σατανᾶ).\textsuperscript{169} But there is still hope for these widows who have been deceived by the demonic doctrines of the false teachers. For Paul, the traditional household is a stronghold for Christian women; as they reenter fully into family life, these younger widows will put themselves beyond the influence of the opponents,\textsuperscript{170} and they will suppress the accusations of Satan.

C. The Family’s Role and the Church’s Role in the Economic Support of Widows (v. 16)

The pericope concludes with a command: the faithful woman is to come to the aid of the widows in her own household (ἐἴ τις πιστὴ ἔχει χήρας, ἐπαρκεῖτω αὕταις).\textsuperscript{171} Thus,

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
    \item See also Marshall, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 605; Mounce, \textit{Pastoral Epistles}, 296; Johnson, \textit{The First and Second Letters to Timothy}, 268; Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus}, 357.
    \item Harris, \textit{Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament}, 250, says that χάριν may indicate purpose (“for the sake of”). But see also Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus}, 356–357, who argues that the prepositional phrase is causal. He translates the final part of v. 14, “give no opportunity to the enemy on account of reviling.” He adds, “In this case, an additional agent is implied, that is, some unnamed agent responsible for the act of reviling… Presumably, Paul means those outside the community, and he therefore has the church’s public reputation in mind.”
    \item BDAG, s.v. “λοιδορία.”
    \item Fee, \textit{1 and 2 Timothy, Titus}, 123.
    \item See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:6 in chapter two.
    \item With Trebilco, \textit{The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius}, 511; Oropeza, \textit{Jews, Gentiles, and the Opponents of Paul}, 276: “The Pauline author believes that through marriage and childbearing the energy of the widows in Ephesus would be redirected toward managing their homes, and they would not be as susceptible to idleness and engaging in foolish talking, and hence, less likely to fall victims of the false teaching.”
    \item Instead of πιστή, some witnesses have πιστές ἡ πιστή (D K L Ψ etc.). But the shorter reading of NA\textsuperscript{28} is better attested (κ A C F G P etc.), and the variant can be
\end{itemize}
v. 16 is a recapitulation of vv. 4, 7-8. Since Paul has just urged the younger widows in Ephesus to return to their proper task of managing the household (οἰκοδεσποτέω), it is fitting for him to now underscore the fact that it is the woman who will supervise provision for family members. The plural noun χήρας probably refers to the mother and mother-in-law of the householder. These women, if they are widowed, are to be cared for by their children (v. 4, 7-8), and their faithful daughter/daughter-in-law is to be the administrator of aid (v. 16). The verb ἐπαρκέω ("to help" or "to aid"), here as an imperative, is repeated from v. 10. By taking on the responsibility of helping widows in their own households, these believing women will free the church of a financial burden. The verb βαρέω means generally "to weigh down," though it can be used specifically of a financial weight. As the family does its part, the Christian community in Ephesus will be able to concentrate its resources, which would have been bountiful (1 Tim 2:9-10; 6:6-10, 17-19) but not boundless (1 Tim 5:16), on those widows who are truly destitute (ἵνα ταῖς δύντων χήρας ἐπαρκέσῃ).

D. Summary and Reflection

Paul’s goal in 1 Tim 5:9-16 is to constrict the church’s charity toward the χήρα. To this end, he provides a profile of two types of widows. He first describes the widow who is worthy of church economic support. This widow will be at least sixty years old, she will have been faithful in her former marriage, and she will have a testimony of God-pleasing deeds that flow from her genuine faith in Christ (vv. 9-10). In vv. 11-13, it becomes clear why Paul provides these criteria for enrollment. One of the problems in Ephesus was that the circle of church-supported widows had enlarged to include unworthy candidates. The unworthy widows are younger women who have professed Christ, though they are now considering marriage with unbelievers. Moreover, these younger widows have acquired a habit of laziness with respect to the Christian profession, and they are characterized by curiosity and verbosity. Paul deals with the problem of these younger widows by once again (1 Tim 2:15) endorsing the traditional female role in the household. The younger widows are to marry, have children, and

explained as an expansion made by copyists who felt that the principle of the verse need not be restricted to Christian women. With Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 574–575.

172 BDAG, s.v. “βαρέω”; Schrenk, TDNT, s.v. “βαρέω.” See also Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 230; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 607; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 298.
manage their homes. For Paul, the traditional household is a stronghold for Christian women. As the younger widows reintegrate fully into family life, they will be protected from the opponents, and they will extinguish the charges of Satan (vv. 14-15). Paul concludes the passage by calling the faithful woman to supervise the care of widows within her own home, so that the church can focus on providing for the truly destitute widow (v. 16).

This passage reveals that the opponents had been successful in recruiting a group of younger widows. These widows had professed Christ (τὴν πρώτην πίστιν, v. 12), though they now side with Satan (ἐξετράπησαν διὰ σίω τοῦ σατανᾶ, v. 15). I have argued that the association of the younger widows with Satan, combined with the reference to the widows “saying what ought not to be said” (v. 13), means that these women were promulgating the opponents’ deviant doctrine. The mode of promulgation (λαλέω), however, is unclear. Additionally, I have suggested that, if these younger women were included in the circle of widows supported by the Christian community, then it seems that the church in Ephesus was unintentionally funding false teaching. This would explain why widows receive so much attention in the letter.

I have dealt with the dilemma of the younger widows desiring marriage (v. 11), while being within a group that forbids marriage (1 Tim 4:3), by pointing out that vv. 11-15 likely provide us with a glimpse of a key decision. Given the likelihood of the claim that marriage and motherhood somehow endangered a woman’s salvation (1 Tim 2:15), perhaps because the opponents considered these to be inappropriate actions for a woman “in the resurrection” (2 Tim 2:18), it seems reasonable to conclude that the decision to marry would have been a violation severe enough to warrant exclusion from the opponents’ group. This is further supported by the fact that Paul treats the traditional household as a place where the Christian woman will be safe from the opponents (v. 14). I contend that the younger widows are faced with three options, two of which would lead to separation from the opponents, but only one of which, in Paul’s assessment, would please God. First, they can attempt to overcome their desire to marry, remain in good standing with the opponents, and continue to be associated with Satan. Second, they can succumb to their sexual desire, marry unbelievers, and separate from the opponents, while still bringing divine condemnation on themselves. Third, they can marry believers, separate from the opponents, and return to God-pleasing works in the traditional household. Since for Paul authentic faith is faith that stands the test of time, persevering
through the avenue of good works (1 Tim 1:5; 2:15), returning to the household will
demonstrate that these widows do indeed have genuine faith.

One additional point should be noted. Like 1 Tim 2:9-15, 1 Tim 5:9-16 reveals
that the opponents could function as an entryway into other ways of living which, in
Paul’s judgment, displeased God. The evidence of 1 Tim 2:9-10 suggests that the
opponents swayed a selection of wealthy women to reject their place in the home, and
some of these same women went on to adopt the social mores of the “new Roman
woman.” It is highly unlikely that the opponents, who probably advocated celibacy, were
directly responsible for promiscuous attire in Ephesus. Similarly, the evidence of 1 Tim
5:11-15 suggests that the opponents had recruited certain widows from within the
Christian community in Ephesus, and some of these same widows were considering
marriage with unbelievers. Thus, the opponents are dangerous, not just because of what
they promulgate, but because of what they precipitate.

III. Godliness and the Greedy (1 Tim 6:6-10)

Many interpreters argue that the author’s primary purpose in 1 Tim 6:3-19 is to
combat the false teachers who make commerce of godliness, though some
commentators contend that chapter six is a conglomeration of material, assembled in the
loose style of paraenesis. In my judgment, the discourse is cogent, and, while it is
possible the false teachers are a central concern within each section of 6:3-19, I will focus
only on 6:6-10. In the chapter on explicit language in 1 Timothy, I demonstrated that

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173 See, for example, Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 326; Oberlinner, Die
Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge, 269–270; Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral
on Riches in 1 Timothy in Light of Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus,” 212, writes of 1
Tim 6:2b-10: “In reviewing ancient evidence alongside Ephesiaca, a plausible
explanation for [the identity of the false teachers] comes in view. The false teachers may
be rich leaders ensconced in religious roles and serving for gain. They promote a different
doctrine rooted in the worship of Artemis supremely.” Hoag argues that the “myths and
genealogies” of 1 Tim 1:4 may refer to the Artemis myth, celebrated in the opening scene
of Ephesiaca (213). He further suggests that cultic laws, promoted and strictly enforced
by rich Ephesians in service to Artemis, are in view in 1 Tim 1:7 (214). In my
assessment, it is much more likely that the Law of Moses is in view in 1 Tim 1:7, 8-10. I
have also argued that it is likely the opponents’ imaginative reading of the OT that Paul
classifies as “myths.” See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:3-7, 8-11; 4:6-10.

174 See, for example, Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 212; Dibelius and Conzelmann,
The Pastoral Epistles, 84, 91, who claim that the warning against greed in 6:6-10 is only
“superficially connected with the polemic against heresy in 6:3-5” (84).

175 First Timothy 6:11-16 contains the noun ἐυσέβεια and the verb ἠγωνίζομαι,
both of which occur in other passages where the opponents are in view. However,
the opponents are clearly in view in 6:2b-5. The description of the opponents Paul offers in 6:4-5 reaches a climax with the phrase, “they suppose godliness to be a means of financial gain.” In 6:6-10, Paul converts the avarice of the opponents into a clear indication that their eschatological account is empty. Thus, the unit provides us with important information about how Paul argues with the opponents. The unit will also corroborate some of my previous suggestions about the opponents themselves.

A. Those with Eschatological Life Will Embrace an Earthly Lifestyle of Simplicity (vv. 6-8)

1. True Godliness, Which Includes Contentment, is of Immense Value (v. 6)

The resemblance to the final phrase of v. 5 makes it clear that Paul is countering “the opponents’ greedy use of godliness.” Two of the terms in v. 6 are repeated from v. 5: πορισμός and εὐσέβεια. The verb εἰμί is in the emphatic position. Thus, the first part of v. 5 may be paraphrased, “And indeed godliness is great gain.” For the opponents, “godliness” is a profit-making enterprise (v. 5). For Paul, godliness itself is the profit (v. 6). πορισμός, which was unqualified in v. 5, is now modified by the adjective μέγας εὐσέβεια is mentioned en passant, and ἡγομένις occurs in 4:6-10, which is not an explicit pericope, so my principle of repetition does not apply. Granted, the explicit text, 1:18, contains language similar to 6:12, though this is not in my view significant enough to warrant a full investigation of 6:11-16. First Timothy 6:17-19 continues the discussion of riches, but where 6:6-10 is best understood as a condemnation of the opponents, 6:17-19 should probably be understood as a charge to a separate group—a wealthy cadre within the church. Contra Kidd, Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles, 96-97. With Verner, The Household of God, 174; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 509–510; Mihoc, “The Final Admonition to Timothy (1 Tim 6,3-21),” 148. For a discussion of the diversity with respect to wealth in the communities addressed in the PD, see Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 404-422.  

See Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 71-72; Mihoc, “The Final Admonition to Timothy (1 Tim 6,3-21),” 143: “That avarice was a central motivation of the false teachers is emphasized throughout vv. 6-10.” Compare Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 276–277, who claims that vv. 6-10 grow out of the charge that the opponents are motivated by greed, though he finds no evidence that the charge is reliable.

Calvin writes: “In an elegant manner and with an ironical turn [Paul] quickly throws back at his opponents the same words with the opposite meaning, as if he had said, ‘They act wrongly and wickedly in making merchandise of Christ’s teaching, as if godliness were gain, and yet understood rightly it is true that godliness is a great and most abundant gain’” (Comm. 1 Tim 6:6).

(“great”). Quinn and Wacker rightly draw attention to the eschatological connotations of the adjective. The term occurs eighty times in Revelation (the most of any NT book). In 1 Tim 3:16, Paul declares, “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness” (καὶ ὁμολογομένως μέγα ἐστίν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον). As God and his plan are great, so is the prize of godliness, which Paul has already declared “beneficial for all things, because it holds the promise of life both now and in the future” (1 Tim 4:8). Having dubbed godliness the path of eschatological existence, the “gain” spoken of here is eschatological or spiritual, so the term πορίσμος is nuanced (“financial gain” in v. 5). Godliness is of great value because of the promise of life that invariably is associated with it.

A prepositional phrase completes the thought of v. 6: “And indeed godliness with contentment is great gain.” The preposition μετά, with the genitive, means “among” or “with,” though in the latter case it has many nuances. The noun αὐτάρκεια occurs in the Pauline writings only here and in 2 Cor 9:8 (see also the adjective αὐτάρκης in Phil 4:11). The philosophers often use αὐτάρκεια in the sense of “self-sufficiency” or “independence,” that is, the ability to exist on one’s inner resources, without outside assistance (e.g., Plato, Resp. 2.369B; Diogenes Laertius 10.130-131). Paul, however, refers to the attitude of contentment that is appropriate for the Christian. Fee suggests that the context in which the adjective αὐτάρκης is used (Phil 4:11) indicates that, for Paul, authentic αὐτάρκεια is not the self-sufficiency of which the Stoics so often wrote, but Christ-sufficiency. Certainly, then, αὐτάρκεια is included in the wider term εὐσεβεία,

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180 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 502.
181 See the discussion of 1 Tim 4:6-10 above.
182 Harris, Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament, 163–164.
184 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 143. See also Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 334; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 253; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 645; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 399.
which I have defined as genuine Christian existence—right belief translated into right behavior. Thus, here in 1 Tim 6:6 Paul emphasizes a particular element of godliness, and he does so to counter the materialistic notion of the opponents. The false teachers’ understanding of godliness is that it is a means to a financial end. On the contrary, Paul explains that true godliness is “accompanied by,” or “includes,” the attitude of “contentment” (μετὰ αὐταρκείας). By their greedy use of “godliness,” the opponents demonstrate that they do not walk the path of true godliness. They have no access to this great gain, so their eschatological account is empty.

2. Material Possessions Have no Eschatological Value (v. 7)

In v. 7, Paul substantiates (γάρ) his notion of contentment by underscoring the ephemeral nature of material goods. The same sentiment is expressed in a host of texts (e.g., Gen 3:19; Eccl 5:15; Job 1:21; Wis 7:6; Sir 40:1; 41:9-10; Philo, Spec. 1.294-295; Seneca, Ep. 20.13; 102.23-25; Pol. Phil. 4.1). The key term of v. 7 is κόσμος, which here refers to the present world, the habitation of humanity. The two verbs, εἰσφέρω and ἐκφέρω, mark the points of entry into and exit out of the κόσμος. εἰσφέρω is used only here by Paul, though the term occurs a total of eight times in the NT (Matt 6:13; Luke 5:18-19; 11:4; 12:11; Acts 17:20; 1 Tim 6:7; Heb 13:11). ἐκφέρω also occurs eight times in the NT (Mark 8:23; Luke 15:22; Acts 5:6, 9, 10, 15; 1 Tim 6:7; Heb 6:8). Each term refers to transport. At both the point of entry into and exit out of the κόσμος that which is transported is the same—“nothing” (οὐδὲν εἰσηγήκαμεν… οὐδὲ ἐξενεγκεῖν τι δύναμθα).

The general idea of v. 7 is clear enough: with respect to material goods, “all humans will depart as they came.” But the connection between the two clauses of v. 7 has been the subject of much debate. Many interpreters suggest a weakened sense of the conjunction δὲ, but the causal sense is intelligible here. As Towner remarks, the idea seems to be that “human existence is just this way: ‘we arrive empty-handed because

185 BDAG, s.v. “κόσμος.”
186 BDAG, s.v. “εἰσφέρω”; BDAG, s.v. “ἐκφέρω.”
187 Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 130.
188 Though there is great variation among the witnesses, the oldest ascertainable reading appears to be δὲ, which has strong support (ε* A F G etc.). With Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 576.
189 See, for example, Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 343; Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 131; Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 1.561–563: “En effet, nous n’avons rien apporté dans le monde, aussi bien nous n’en pouvons rien emporter.”
in fact that is just the way we will leave’; material possessions and advantage cannot pass through the veil, and if they could, we would have arrived better equipped.”

Material goods are confined to the κόσμος; therefore, the one who has received the eschatological life that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 1:1, 10) will realize the futility of greed.

3. Believers Accept as Adequate the Basics of Sustenance and Coverings (v. 8)

Since true godliness is the path of eschatological existence (1 Tim 4:8), and since material possessions cannot exist beyond this earth (1 Tim 6:7), believers can and should be content with the irreducible necessities of earthly life (1 Tim 6:8). The participle ἔχοντες is conditional (“if we have”). The unstated subject is Paul and Timothy, and presumably the rest of the Christian community in Ephesus. There is no reason to think that the contentment spoken of here is unique to Paul and his delegate, especially since, as I have suggested, αὐτάρκεια is an element of εὐσέβεια. Christians require only two items: διατροφή and σκέπασμα. Both terms are NT hapaxes. Elsewhere, διατροφή is “food” or “sustenance” (e.g., 1 Macc 6:49; Josephus, Ant. 2.88; 4.231; Epictetus, Ench. 12.1), and σκέπασμα is in general “covering,” primarily “clothing,” but also “housing” (e.g., Aristotle, Metaph. 1043a).

“With sustenance and coverings,” Paul declares, “we will be content” (τούτοις ἀρχεσθερόμεθα). When passive, the verb ἄρχεω means “to be satisfied/content” (see also Luke 3:4; Heb 13:5; 2 Macc 5:15; 4 Macc 6:28; Josephus, Vita 244). The future indicative possibly is imperatival in force (a Hebraism). While Dibelius and Conzelmann argue that the idea of v. 8 “reflects the spirit of Stoicism,” Fee is correct

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190 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 400. See also Barrett, The Pastoral Epistles, 84.
191 BDAG, s.v. “διατροφή.”
192 See, for example, Aristotle, Pol. 1336a; Josephus, B.J. 2.129; Philo, Det. 19: ἐὰν οὖν τινα θέασῃ σίτα καὶ ποτὰ μὴ ἐν καιρῷ προσέμενον ἡ λουτρὰ καὶ ἀλέιμματα παραιτούμενον ἡ τῶν περὶ σῶμα σκεπασμάτων ἀμελοῦτα.
193 BDAG, s.v. “σκέπασμα”: “that which serves as a cover and hence as a protection.”
194 BDAG, s.v. “ἄρχεω”; Kittel, TDNT, s.v. “ἄρχεω.”
195 See the discussion of the options in Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 85; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 509. Commentators suggesting imperatival force include Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 137; Roloff, Der Erste Brief an Timotheus, 336; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 648; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 401n47. On the imperatival future, see Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 569-570.
196 Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 85.
in observing that Paul here reflects more precisely the teaching of Jesus (e.g., Matt 6:24-34; Luke 12:16-32). Believers will accept as adequate the basics of sustenance and coverings, which is to say, they will embrace an earthly lifestyle of simplicity.

B. Those Who Pursue Earthly Riches Plunge into Eternal Ruin (vv. 9-10)

Verses 9-10 serve as a contrast (δὲ) to vv. 6-8. In contradistinction to the godly, who are characterized by contentment and simplicity, are “those who desire to be rich” (οἱ δὲ βουλόμενοι). It is highly likely that those who think εὐσέβεια is a way to turn a profit (v. 5) are those who desire wealth (v. 9), and, as a result, turn away from the faith (v. 10). Every explicit section of the letter refers in similar fashion to the opponents’ rejection of the faith (1:6; 1:19; 4:1; 6:3, 5a; 6:21). Therefore, though the words of vv. 9-10 are general enough to apply anywhere, the immediate application is to the financial motive of the false teachers. Verses 9-10 may be divided into three parts. First, Paul warns Timothy and the Christian community about the dangers associated with the pursuit of wealth (v. 9). Second, Paul bolsters his view of wealth with a proverbial statement (v. 10a). Finally, Paul paints a bleak picture of the situation in Ephesus (v. 10b).

1. General Warning: Greed Causes a Downward Spiral (v. 9)

The substantival participle οἱ βουλόμενοι describes a group of individuals in terms of their common desire. In 1 Tim 1:7, Paul described the opponents as the ones “aspiring to be teachers of the law” (ἠλπιστέεσ εἶναι νομοδιδάσκαλοι). Here in 1 Tim 6:9, the opponents’ desire is made specific by the infinitive, πλουτεῖν. The verb πλουτέω occurs five times in the Pauline letters (undisputed: Rom 10:12; 1 Cor 4:8; 2 Cor 8:9; disputed: 1 Tim 6:9, 18). It means “to be plentifully supplied with something,” “to be rich.”

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197 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 144. Fee finds a pattern in 1 Tim 5:18 and 1 Tim 6:7-8: Paul first alludes to an OT text, and he then references a teaching of Jesus.
198 Thus, Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 115–128, inappropriately divides chapter 6. He finds two main sections: 6:1-8 and 6:9-21. But vv. 9-10 are closely linked with vv. 6-8, and the whole pericope (vv. 6-10) is tied to v. 5.
199 See Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 144; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 649; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 343; Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 71; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 401; Mihoc, “The Final Admonition to Timothy (1 Tim 6,3-21),” 144.
200 BDAG, s.v. “βουλόμαι.”
201 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 295, also makes the connection between 1 Tim 1:7 and 1 Tim 6:9.
202 BDAG, s.v. “πλουτέω.”
connects the participial phrases in 1:7 and 6:9. The opponents are driven by the desire for riches (6:9), and they think “godliness” will fill their pockets (6:5b), so they aspire to teach (1:7).

The desire for riches leads to a downward spiral, as indicated by the next two verbs of v. 9: ἐμπίπτω and βυθίζω. ἐμπίπτω means “to fall into a particular physical area” or “to fall into a certain condition.” Paul uses the verb only here and in 1 Tim 3:6-7, where it is said that an elder must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up and “fall into the condemnation of the devil” (ἐἰς κρίμα ἐμπέση τοῦ διαβόλου), and that an elder must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he will not “fall into disgrace and into a trap of the devil” (ἐἰς ὠνείδισμον ἐμπέση και παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου). Here, Paul recounts a sequence of “falling” that is unavoidable and continual for those wishing to be rich. They fall into “a temptation” (πειρασμός), “a trap” (παγίς), and “many lusts” (ἐπιθυμίας πολλὰς). The noun πειρασμός occurs often in the NT, but only four times in the Pauline letters (undisputed: twice in 1 Cor 10:13; Gal 4:14; disputed: 1 Tim 6:9). The related verb πειράζω is slightly more common (1 Cor 7:5; 10:9, 13; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 6:1; twice in 1 Thess 3:5). πειρασμός can mean “test/trial” or “temptation.” In the sense of “temptation,” πειρασμός is used in the NT both actively (“the action of tempting”; e.g., Luke 4:13) and passively (“the state of being tempted”; often with εἰς; see Matt 6:13; 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 11:4; 22:40, 46). In 1 Tim 6:9, the term is used in the passive sense; the would-be wealthy are lured into an opportune occasion for sin. Mounce suggests that, since temptation is common to man (1 Cor 10:13), Paul here has in mind a special temptation or set of temptations that does not surface unless a person is pursuing riches.

The second noun in the sequence, παγίς, shifts the image from enticement to entrapment. A παγίς is a “trap” or a “snare.” Though the term occurs sixty-two times

203 BDAG, s.v. “ἐμπίπτω”; TLNT, s.v. “ἐμπίπτω.”
204 Note the present tense verb (ἐμπίπτοντος). See Spicq, Les Épîtres Pastorales, 1:563; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 510.
205 BDAG, s.v. “πειρασμός.”
206 With Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 255; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 650; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 402.
207 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 344–345.
208 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 402. Some Western witnesses (D* F G etc.) have παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου, but this can be explained as assimilation to 1 Tim 3:7. With Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 576.
in the LXX, in the NT only Luke and Paul use παγίς, and Paul uses the term only once outside the PD (Luke 21:35; Rom 11:9, quoting Ps 69:23). Three of the five NT uses of the term are concentrated in 1 and 2 Timothy. Two of the three occurrences in the PD include the genitive phrase “of the devil” (1 Tim 3:7; 2 Tim 2:26). In 1 Tim 3:7, Paul states that an elder must guard his reputation, lest he “fall into a trap of the devil” (εἰς… ἐμπέση… παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου). The similarities in 1 Tim 6:9 (ἔμπιπτουσιν εἰς… παγίδα, “they fall into a trap”) suggest that the trap spoken of here is to be understood as a παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου. Perhaps since he used the full expression παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου in 3:7, and since references to the principal evil being pepper the letter (e.g., 1:20; 2:14; 3:6, 7; 5:14, 15), Paul felt παγίς alone would suffice in this instance.

The implied genitive phrase “of the devil” (τοῦ διαβόλου) could be classified as a subjective genitive (“a trap set by the devil”) or as an objective genitive (“the trap the devil himself fell into,” i.e., his sin). The proximity of the word πειρασμός makes the former option more likely. Paul’s point seems to be that the devil both stages the temptation and sets the snare to catch those who desire wealth. This certainly is the interpretation most consistent with 2 Tim 2:26, where it is said that those caught in the trap of the devil are held captive to do his will (καὶ ἀνανήψουσιν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου παγίδος, ἐξωγηγημένοι ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ἐκείνου θέλημα).

The final noun, ἐπιθυμία (“a strong desire”), is expanded into a lengthy phrase. The elaboration suggests that this noun carries the main emphasis. This is the only occurrence of ἐπιθυμία in 1 Timothy, though the term occurs three times in 2 Timothy (2:22; 3:6; 4:3), two times in Titus (2:12; 3:3), and thirteen times in the other Pauline writings (undisputed: Rom 1:24; 6:12; 7:7, 8; 13:14; Gal 5:16, 24; Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 2:17; 4:5; disputed: Eph 2:3; 4:22; Col 3:5). In seventeen of nineteen occurrences, the

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209 BDAG, s.v. “παγίς.”
210 With Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, 125; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 255–256; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 345; Schneider, TDNT, s.v. “παγίς.”
211 Seesemann, TDNT, s.v. “πειρασμός,” remarks that, though it is not explicit, one may easily think of Satan as the author of the temptation.
212 We find a similar sentiment in CD 4:15–17: “They are Belial’s three nets about which Levi, son of Jacob spoke, in which he catches Israel and makes them appear before them like three types of justice. The first is fornication; the second, wealth; the third, defilement of the temple.”
213 BDAG, s.v. “ἐπιθυμία.”
term has negative connotations (more positive in Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 2:17). Two adjectives qualify the “many lusts” mentioned here in 1 Tim 6:9. ἀνόητος means “foolish” (undisputed: Rom 1:14; Gal 3:1, 3; disputed: 1 Tim 6:9; Titus 3:3). In Titus 3:3, the term refers to the intellectual and spiritual condition of Paul and the believers in Crete before the appropriation of salvation. The second adjective, βλαβερός, is a NT hapax. Derived from βλάβη, “damage, harmfulness” (Wis 11:19), the adjective βλαβερός describes that which does harm. The term is used in Prov 10:26 LXX: “A sour grape is harmful to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes” (ὄµφαξ ὁδούσι βλαβερόν καὶ καπνὸς ὀµμασίν).

The indefinite relative pronoun αἱτίνες refers back to the “many foolish and harmful lusts.” These lusts, Paul says, are of the sort that causes sinking (αἱτίνες βυθίζονται τοὺς ἀνθρώπους). The downward spiral that began with the verb ἐμπίπτω (“to fall”) now continues with the verb βυθίζω. βυθίζω occurs in the NT only here and in Luke 5:7. When used literally, the verb means “to cause something to sink” (Luke 5:7; 2 Macc 12:4). The figurative extension is “to cause someone to be engulfed in disastrous consequences.” In this case, the greedy will plunge “into utter destruction” (εἰς ὄλεθρον καὶ ἀπώλειαν). The two nouns, ὄλεθρος (undisputed: 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Thess 5:3; disputed: 2 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 6:9) and ἀπώλεια (undisputed: Rom 9:22; Phil 1:28; 3:19; disputed: 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 6:9; thirteen times outside Paul in the NT), have essentially the same meaning—“the state of destruction.” Some commentators suggest that the first term refers to material ruin, while the second refers to eschatological judgment. This seems unlikely. In 2 Thess 1:9 the first term, ὄλεθρος, refers to eternal separation from the presence of the Lord. Additionally, ὄλεθρος occurs in an eschatological context in 1 Thess 5:3 (ἡμέρα κυρίου). This leaves only 1 Cor 5:5, where Paul clearly delimits the

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215 Büchsel, TDNT, s.v. “ἐπιθυμία”: “For Paul, who alone in the NT offers an explicit doctrine of sinful man, ἐπιθυμία is a manifestation of the sin which dwells in man and which controls him.”
216 BDAG, s.v. “ἀνόητος.”
217 TLNT, s.v. “βλαβερός.”
218 See also Xenophon, Mem. 1.3.11; Aristotle, Pol. 3.15.13; Herm. Vis. 17.4 [3.9.4]; Philo, Leg. 3.76, 80; Sacr. 71; Fug. 43; the word occurs over fifty times in Philo.
219 BDAG, s.v. “βυθίζω.”
220 BDAG, s.v. “ἐλεθρος”; BDAG, s.v. “ἀπώλεια.”
221 Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 137; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 256–257.
destruction: παραδούναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὀλεθρον τῆς σαρκὸς. Thus, Paul probably uses both ὀλεθρος and ἀπώλεια here in 1 Tim 6:9 to emphasize eschatological destruction. Paul’s prognosis is: the avaricious are lured into sin, ensnared by the devil, and controlled by a range of evil urges that lead to their eternal destruction.

2. Proverbial Reinforcement: Countless Evils Spring from Greed (v. 10a)

In v. 10a, Paul formulates or recites a maxim that supports his position on wealth. Dicta similar to the one contained in v. 10a were not in short supply in antiquity. The noun φιλαργυρία is found only here in the NT, and it occurs in the LXX only in 4 Macc 1:26. The adjectives φιλάργυρος and ἀφιλάργυρος, and the verb φιλαργυρέω, are uncommon as well. Although it is a NT hapax, φιλαργυρία is well documented in the contemporary literature (e.g., Philo, Spec. 1.24; 1.281; 2.78; Epictetus, Disc. 2.16.45; T. Jud. 18.2; 19.1). The term is a compound of φιλία (“love”) and ἀργύριον (“silver”), meaning “love of money,” “avarice,” or “miserliness.” In view here is a strong allegiance to money, in the fashion that led Christ to contend: “You cannot serve both God and wealth” (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13).

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223 Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 257, presents three options: 1) Paul cites a common proverb because it expresses truth, 2) Paul or the Christian community modified the common proverbs by adding the word ῥίζα, and 3) Paul or the Christian community coined this proverb. Knight rightly suggests that the second option is most likely, since many proverbial statements about the love of money are known, but none with the word ῥίζα.

224 See Stobaeus, Ecl. 3; Ps.-Phocylides 42; Pol. Phil. 4.1; Diogenes Laertius 6.50: τὴν φιλαργυρίαν εἶπε μητρόπολιν πάντων τῶν κακῶν. See the additional references in Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 85–86; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 652n55; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 296.

225 Spicq, TLNT, s.v. “φιλαργυρία,” incorrectly claims that the noun is unknown in the LXX (4 Macc 1:26: καὶ τὰ μὲν ψυχῆς ἀλαζονεία καὶ φιλαργυρία καὶ φιλοδοξία καὶ φιλονεικία καὶ βασκανία).

226 For the first adjective, see Luke 16:14; 2 Tim 3:2; 4 Macc 2:8; for the second adjective, see 1 Tim 3:3; Heb 13:5; for the verb, see 2 Macc 10:20.

227 Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 134.

228 BDAG, s.v. “φιλαργυρία.”

Paul declares that the love of money “is the root of all the evils” (ῥίζα πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἐστιν). ῥίζα (“root”)230 is used figuratively, as in some of the parables of Jesus (Matt 13:21; Luke 8:13; see also Rom 11:16-18). The term κακός (“evil”)231 occurs twenty-six times in the Pauline corpus, though the term is used only three times in the PD (1 Tim 6:10; 2 Tim 4:14; Titus 1:12). Though πάντων can mean “all kinds of,” the presence of the article with κακός makes this meaning improbable.232 The more likely translation of πάντων τῶν κακῶν is “of all the evils.”

One matter in v. 10a remains to be settled: How should we interpret the anarthrous use of ῥίζα? It is very difficult to determine if ῥίζα is purposefully anarthrous, “a root,”233 or if the emphatic position of the noun and the forcefulness of the statement suggest the definite translation, “the root.”234 Since, according to Colwell’s rule, definite predicate nouns that precede the verb usually lack the article, ῥίζα cannot be translated as indefinite solely because of the absence of the article.235 Daniel Wallace suggests that, grammatically, it would be difficult to take ῥίζα as indefinite, because this is the least attested meaning for the anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominative in the NT. However, Wallace claims that, logically, it would be difficult to say that ῥίζα is definite, for then the meaning would be either that the only root of evil is the love of money or that the greatest root (par excellence) of evil is the love of money.236 But here Wallace fails to consider the possibility that v. 10a is a hyperbolical proverb.237 In this case, ῥίζα can be taken as

Dschulnigg claims that 6:6-10 is one of the purest reflections of Jesus’ teaching on wealth anywhere in the NT (77).

230 BDAG, s.v. “ῥίζα.”
231 BDAG, s.v. “κακός”; Grundman, TDNT, s.v. “κακός.”
233 Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 138; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 257; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 346; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 296; Collins, I and 2 Timothy and Titus, 159; Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 134.
234 Fee, I and 2 Timothy, Titus, 147; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 651; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 404.
235 Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 256–265.
236 Ibid., 265. In the end, Wallace classifies ῥίζα as qualitative (“all evils can be motivated by the love of money”).
237 Calvin, Comm. 1 Tim 6:10; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 651.
definite without the desire for wealth being understood as the source of every evil. Paul means, rather, that innumerable evils spring from avarice.

3. Description of the Local Situation: Greed Has Already Caused Great Pain for Some (v. 10b)

The pericope ends on a disconsolate note. Avarice has already produced countless evils and devastating results in Ephesus. The plural indefinite pronoun (τινες) is in 1 Timothy Paul’s preferred way of referencing the opponents and those who associate with them (1 Tim 1:6, 19; 4:1; 5:15; 6:21). Paul uses the verb ὄργω only here and in 1 Tim 3:1 (but see also Heb 11:16). According to Spicq, the verb means “to tend toward, aim for, aspire to, try to reach.” Here, ὄργω appears as an adverbial participle, either of means (“by aspiring”) or of cause (“because they aspire”). The feminine relative pronoun (ἡς) refers to the immediately preceding ἡ φιλαργυρία, which is now necessarily modified to mean “money,” rather than “the love of money.” The idea of desire is expressed in the participle, so retaining the full expression, “love of money,” would be redundant.

The first finite verb of v. 10b is ἀποπλανάω, which means “to mislead” (active) or “to be led astray” (passive). The verb occurs in the NT only here and in Mark 13:22: “False christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray (ἀποπλανάω), if possible, the elect.” In the Apostolic Fathers, ἀποπλανάω is one of the standard terms for apostatizing (e.g., Pol. Phil. 6.1; Herm. Man. 10.1.5; Herm. Sim. 6.3.3; 9.20.2). Here in 1 Tim 6:10b, the verb is passive. Because in v. 9 Paul implies that the avaricious are lured into sin and ensnared by the devil, it seems likely that Satan is the unstated subject of the verb here. The devil was involved in the opponents’ demise.

The undoing of the opponents is described in two ways. First, by reaching for riches, they have been led away “from the faith” (ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως). πίστις with the article refers to objective content, as it does so often in the PD (1 Tim 1:19; 3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8, 12; 6:10, 12, 21; 2 Tim 1:5; 2:18; 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:13; 2:2). The same formulation—relative pronoun + plural indefinite pronoun + instrumental/causal participle + finite verb indicating rejection + reference to the objective content of the faith—is found in 1 Tim

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238 TLNT, s.v. “ὀργαναί.” See also Heidland, TDNT, s.v. “ὀργαναί,” with multiple primary references.
239 See, for example, Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 347.
240 See, for example, Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 258.
241 BDAG, s.v. “ἀποπλανάω.”
1:19, which is within an explicit unit. This strengthens the argument that 1 Tim 6:6-10 is not simply generic admonition, but Paul’s condemnation of the greedy opponents.

Second, the opponents have “pierced themselves with many pains” (ἔαυτοὺς περιέπειραν ὀδύναις πολλαῖς). While the devil deceived them, the opponents inflicted their own injuries. The verb περιέπειρω is found only here in the NT. It is not documented in the LXX or in the Apostolic Fathers. The term is attested in its literal sense of “to pierce with a sword or stake” in Diodorus Siculus 16.80; 19.84 and in Josephus, B.J. 3.296. Philo uses περιέπειρω figuratively, claiming that Flaccus Avillius “inflicted the most intolerable evils on all who came within his reach” (ἐφ’ ὅσους δ’ ἐφθανεν, ἀθρόους ἀνηκέστοις περιέπειρε κακοῖς, Flacc. 1). 242 ὀδύνη is “physical misery” or “mental pain.” 243 The undisputed Paul uses the noun in Rom 9:2 when he expresses that he has deep distress in his heart because his fellow-countrymen are cut off from salvation (ἀδιάλειπτος ὀδύνῇ τῇ καρδίᾳ μου). Quinn and Wacker aptly summarize the graphic statement that brings 1 Tim 6:6-10 to a close: “The riches themselves, so eagerly sought, leave those who have acquired them in desperate frustration and anguish, neither satisfying their greed nor healing their hearts. Thus they torture themselves with the things that they hope will cure them.” 244

C. Summary and Reflection

In my view, this pericope functions primarily as an argument against the false teachers. That the opponents are in view here is evidenced by Paul’s use of both πορισμός and εὐσέβεια in vv. 5-6 and by the combination of relative pronoun, plural indefinite pronoun, instrumental/causal participle, finite verb indicating rejection, and reference to the objective content of the faith, which is found in both 1 Tim 1:19 and in v. 10. Paul has in 1 Tim 4:6-10 explained that godliness is the path of eschatological existence, so he begins 1 Tim 6:6-10 by stating that godliness, which includes the attitude of contentment, is “great gain” (v. 6). True godliness includes contentment precisely because godliness is the path of eschatological existence. Material goods are confined to the κόσμος. Therefore, the one who walks the eschatological path of εὐσέβεια will not be consumed

242 See also Somn. 2.103; Praem. 20.
243 BDAG, s.v. “ὁδύνη”; Hauck, TDNT, s.v. “ὁδύνη.”
244 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 514. See also Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 653; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 296; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 404–405.
by the pursuit of riches; rather, he or she will accept as adequate the basics of sustenance and coverings (vv. 7-8). Paul is clear that an earthly lifestyle of simplicity goes hand in hand with the life that is “both now and in the future” (1 Tim 4:8). Thus, Paul turns a key feature of the opponents’ operation into a clear indication of the falsity of their position. Though the opponents make eschatological claims (2 Tim 2:18), their greed demonstrates that they have strayed from the path of eschatological life.

First Timothy 6:6-10 also confirms and clarifies some of my previous suggestions about the opponents. First, the passage seems to indicate that the opponents accepted payment for their teaching. I have suggested that Paul underscores αὐτάρκεια as an element of εὐσέβεια to counter the opponents’ greedy use of “godliness” (1 Tim 6:5). I have proposed that the participial phrase in 1 Tim 6:5b (νομιζόντων πορισμόν εἶναι τὴν εὐσέβειαν) mediates the participial phrases in 1:7 (θέλοντες εἶναι νομοδιδάσκαλοι) and 6:9 (οἱ βουλόμενοι πλουτεῖν). The opponents are driven by the desire for riches (6:9), and they think εὐσέβεια will fill their pockets (6:5b), so they aspire to teach the law (1:7).

Second, Paul implies that the opponents are incarcerated by the devil and he suggests that the devil gained a foothold through the opponents’ desire for financial gain. Paul has already stated that the opponents are minions of Satan, whose consciences and lives bear his mark (1 Tim 4:1-5). In 1 Tim 6:9-10, Paul provides the backstory. The devil staged the temptation and set the snare to catch the greedy opponents (v. 9). Moreover, the devil is the one who led the opponents away from the faith (ἀποπλανάω, v. 10b). It was by reaching for riches that the false teachers were captured to do the devil’s bidding.

Third, Paul states plainly that the opponents have rejected the apostolic teaching. This is the dominant critique of the letter (1:3-4, 6, 19; 4:1, 7; 5:13; 6:3, 10, 20, 21). The false teachers’ desire for wealth has caused them to veer away from the faith (v. 10b). They have not only suffered shipwreck (1 Tim 1:19), but they have plunged into the waters of eschatological destruction (1 Tim 6:9).

**Conclusion**

I have endeavored in this chapter and in the previous one to offer a careful exegetical analysis of the five implicit units of 1 Timothy (1:8-11; 2:9-15; 4:6-10; 5:9-16; 6:6-10). Each passage has proved to be interpretively significant, and the alleged intangible opponents are coming into focus. Having completed my analysis of 1 Timothy, I turn now to the oppositional units in 2 Timothy.
5
Exegetical Analysis of Explicit and Implicit Units in 2 Timothy

Introduction
We will now direct our attention to 2 Timothy. In chapter one, I argued that, whether doubly authentic or doubly pseudonymous, the intended destination of both 1 and 2 Timothy was most likely Ephesus. I hope to demonstrate in this chapter that the conflict in Ephesus reflected in 2 Timothy has clear connections to the conflict reflected in 1 Timothy, which suggests that the letters address (albeit rather differently)\(^1\) the same crisis. In customary fashion, our investigation of the crisis will begin with the units containing explicit language, the units where we have certain reference to the opponents. Explicit language is found in three units of 2 Timothy (2:14-26; 3:1-9; 4:1-5).\(^2\) Implicit language is contained in only one unit of 2 Timothy (2:8-13).\(^3\) By way of reminder, I have defined implicit language as expressions that call the opponents to mind without mentioning them directly, and I have suggested that, although there are many clues that might suggest the opponents are again in view, the most reliable piece of evidence is repetition. When key words or major themes found in the explicit units are developed elsewhere in the letter, it is highly probable that the opponents are once more on Paul’s

\(^1\) I refer here to the difference in genre. First Timothy, I have argued, is an epistolary version of the *mandata principis*; Paul provides theological and ethical instructions for his delegate, with the understanding that the Christian community in Ephesus will overhear these instructions. Second Timothy, on the other hand, is a personal paraenetic letter nonpareil; approaching his death, Paul holds himself out as a positive example for his beloved child, Timothy, while at the same time highlighting the negative aspects of the opponents. See chapter one for a full discussion of genre.


\(^3\) There is a passing reference to wicked people (3:13) and a brief warning about a troublesome individual, Alexander the coppersmith (4:14-15), though in both these cases very little information is given, and what is said is simply reiteration (see the discussion of wickedness, imposters in the church, and rejection of truth in 2:14-26).
mind. The important theme of resurrection, which will surface in the explicit passage, 2:14-26, also surfaces in the immediately preceding pericope, 2:8-13; thus, it is highly likely that this unit was crafted (at least in part) to combat the opponents. Since the footprints of the opponents are found in only four units of 2 Timothy, I will examine the three explicit units and the one implicit unit in the current chapter.

I. Ministering amid False Teachers (2 Tim 2:14-26)

The central section of the letter (2:14-3:9) focuses on the presence of false teachers in Ephesus. The material is logically connected with the preceding section (1:3-2:13), which summons Timothy to join Paul in suffering. The central section describes in vivid detail how the struggle for the apostolic gospel is to be conducted in the face of opposition. The first unit, 2:14-26, can be divided into three subsections: vv. 14-18, vv. 19-21, and vv. 22-26. A pattern is evident in the first and third subsections: 1) prohibition or negative command (vv. 14, 21a), 2) positive command (vv. 15, 22b), 3) negative command (vv. 16-17a, 23), and 4) description (of the false teaching in vv. 17b-18, of the Lord’s servant in vv. 24-25a). Instructions to avoid word wars (v. 14), empty sounds (v. 16), deadly doctrine (v. 17), and uninstructed debates (v. 23) are paired with admonition for Timothy to engage in substantially more profitable pursuits. In the middle subsection (vv. 19-21), Paul encourages Timothy in his ministerial tasks by reminding the delegate that the false teachers in his midst cannot erode the solidity of the true community of the Lord. The unit furnishes us with significant information about the opponents’ teaching, as well as details about the procedure for dealing with the opponents.

A. Timothy Must Direct the Faithful Christian Community away from the False Teaching to the Word of Truth (vv. 14-18)

1. Negative: Remind the Community of Christ, and Urge Them to Avoid the Opponents’ Doctrinal Debates (v. 14)

The demonstrative pronoun (Ταῦτα) with the imperative (ὑπομιμήσας) signals the start of a new section. A significant shift occurs at 2:14. From the beginning of the letter, Paul has been almost entirely concerned with Timothy personally (the exceptions being 1:15-18; 2:2), but here he exhorts Timothy to “instruct others by way of reminder.” Smith

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4 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 253, states that in 2 Tim 2:14-3:9 the focus is on the false teachers and what Timothy is to do in response to them; thus, the two passages have much in common with 1 Tim 1; 4; 6. Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 245, claims that in 2:14-26 the author provides instructions for arguing with opponents.

5 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 149.

6 Ibid.
argues: “Timothy’s reminding activity was an authoritative didactic activity that did not involve teaching new content, but calling believers back to the unchanging truths of the character of Christ and the gospel.” She adds: “The unchanging nature of the content is implicit in the mechanism of [this didactic activity]. There could be no progress or change in the content, as this would render the activity of reminding or remembering void.”

The verb ὑπομιμνῄσκω occurs twice in the PD (2 Tim 2:14; Titus 3:1), and three additional times in the NT (2 Pet 1:12; 3 John 10; Jude 5). This is the only time the verb occurs without a direct object. Most likely, the addressees are all believers in Ephesus. This is both consistent with the way the term is employed in Titus 3:1 and sensitive to the immediate context of 2 Tim 2:14. The robust Christology of 2:8-13 must be proclaimed repeatedly to the congregation, especially since there are some who do not affirm the future bodily resurrection (v. 18; compare v. 11b).

Calvin writes: “The summary of the Gospel [Paul] has just given along with its added exhortations is so important that a good minister should never grow weary of dealing with them. They are things that deserve constant treatment and men cannot be reminded of them too often.”

The participle διαμαρτυρόμενος is coordinate with the finite verb ὑπομιμνῄσκε (“remind and urge”). The verb διαμαρτύρομαι has the strong sense “to solemnly urge.”

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7 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 357, emphasis added.

8 Ibid., 360. Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 745, writes: “ὑπομιμνῄσκω is here used of reminding people of the teaching they already know which needs constant repetition.”


10 The plural demonstrative pronoun refers either to the material of 2:8-13 specifically, or to this material as part of the larger body of apostolic teaching. See Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 98; Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:753; Marshall, The Pastoral Épistles, 745–746; Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 229; Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 357.

11 Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 2:14.

12 BDAG, s.v. “διαμαρτύρομαι.”
ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου places Timothy’s activities in the arena of God’s courtroom. The formulaic phrase reminds those charged that they must give an account to God himself. Timothy is to charge the faithful Christian community “not to wrangle over words” (μὴ λογομαχέων). The verb λογομαχέω (“to dispute about words”) is found in the NT only here, but the related noun λογομαχία occurs in 1 Tim 6:4, and the idea of verbal disputes will surface again in this pericope (v. 23). As Fee indicates, quarreling about words is one of the chief characteristics of the false teachers. Paul’s point here seems to be that the faithful Christians in Ephesus are not to descend to the polemical level of the opponents. The point is thus similar to that of 1 Tim 6:20-21, where Paul calls for Timothy to curb his interaction with the opponents: he is to ignore the teaching, but not the teachers themselves. Here, Timothy is to urge the faithful Christian community to steer clear of the opponents’ debates, though this does not necessarily mean that they must avoid the debaters.

The debates in which the opponents are engaged are “beneficial for nothing” (ἐπὶ οὐδὲν χρήσιμον). Furthermore, the wrangling “brings about the destruction of the hearers” (ἐπὶ καταστροφή τῶν ἀκουόντων). καταστροφή occurs in the NT only here and in 2 Pet 2:6 (a variant reading). The term can refer to the physical destruction and eschatological judgment that comes from God (e.g., 2 Pet 2:6; Gen 19:29 LXX; 2 Chron 22:7 LXX; 1 Clem 7.7). The author of 1 Clement writes: “Jonah proclaimed destruction (καταστροφή) to the people of Nineveh; but those who repented of their sins appeased

13 It is extremely difficult to decide between ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ (A D K L P Ψ etc.) and ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου (A D K L P Ψ etc.). ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ occurs four times in the PD (1 Tim 5:4, 21; 6:13; 2 Tim 4:1; ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in 1 Tim 5:21; 2 Tim 4:1). ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου occurs nowhere else in the PD, and only twice in the NT (Luke 1:15; Rev 11:4; without the article in Luke 1:76; 2 Cor 8:21; Jas 4:10). Thus, it seems likely that the original reading of 2 Tim 2:14, ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου, was assimilated to ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ (Contra Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 579; NA	extsuperscript{28}). But whether we read χώριος or θεός, there is no essential difference in meaning.

14 Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 230.
15 BDAG, s.v. “λογομαχέω.”
16 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 254.
19 For ἐπὶ with the dative to introduce a result clause, see BDF §235.
God through their fervent pleas and received salvation, even though they had been alienated from God” (7.7). Paul has already declared that the opponents in Ephesus are on the path to eschatological ruin (δὲ λέθρων και ἀπώλειαν, 1 Tim 6:9). He now calls Timothy to warn the faithful community in Ephesus: should they participate in the opponents’ wrangling, they too will experience the judgment of God. The prepositional phrase ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου lends weight to this interpretation of καταστροφή. Believers are charged in the presence of the Lord, the one who will judge the living and the dead (2 Tim 4:1). Since involvement in the disputes of the opponents leads to eschatological ruin, Knight’s conclusion is correct: “Paul is not referring to ‘hair splitting’ but to the kind of serious dispute about the meaning and significance of words relating to the Christian faith.”

2. Positive: Be a Straightforward Communicator of the Apostolic Gospel (v. 15)

Having just explained that the opponents’ word wars lead to the destruction of the hearers (ἐπὶ καταστροφῇ τῶν ἀκουόντων, v. 14), Paul shifts the focus to Timothy’s character and teaching, so the thought is the same as in 1 Tim 4:16, where it is said that the delegate’s conduct and the content of his teaching will save the hearers (σώσεις τοῦ ἀκουόντας σου). Paul commands: “Make every effort to present yourself to God as one who is approved” (σπουδαζον παραστήσαι τῷ θεῷ). The verb σπουδάζω occurs seven times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: Gal 2:10; 1 Thess 2:17; disputed: Eph 4:3; 2 Tim 2:15; 4:9, 21; Titus 3:12). The term can mean “to make haste” or “to be zealous,” but the latter sense is clearly intended here. While the verb παρίστημι can be used in the sense of offering oneself as a sacrifice to God (e.g., Rom 12:1), the absence of cultic language and the presence of ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου in the preceding verse make it more likely that the idea here is of Timothy presenting himself before the divine judge. This is further evidenced by the use of the adjective, δόκιμος (“approved”), Timothy must present himself to God, who alone will determine the adequacy of the delegate’s ministry.

The meaning of “approved” is developed further by the phrase “an unashamed worker” (ἐργάτην ἀνεπαίσχυντον). The undisputed Paul uses the noun ἐργάτης only twice,
both times in reference to corrupt workers (ἐργάται δύλιοι, 2 Cor 11:13; τούς κακούς ἐργάτας, Phil 3:2). The term has positive connotations in the PD (1 Tim 5:18; 2 Tim 2:15). The adjective ἀνεπαίσχυντος is a NT hapax. The term is not found in the LXX or in the Apostolic Fathers. It occurs only in Josephus, Ant. 18.243 and in later Christian writers. The word appears to mean “unashamed,” and in the context of 2 Tim 2:15 the reference is specifically to Timothy not feeling ashamed before God because he failed to do his ministerial duty.

The participle ὀρθοτομοῦντα could be classified as adjectival, further defining Timothy, or it could be construed as an adverbial participle of means, expressing how Timothy is to become a worker with no need to be ashamed. The verb ὀρθοτομεῖω is rare; it occurs only here in the NT and only twice in the LXX (Prov 3:6; 11:5). The term is a compound of the adjective ὁρθός (“straight” or “correct”) and the verb τέμνω (“to cut”), and in both occurrences in the LXX it is used with the noun ὁδὸς (“way” or “road”). In 2 Tim 2:15, however, the object of the verb is “the word of truth” (τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας). The phrase, which occurs only here in the PD (but see Eph 1:13; Col 1:5), is synonymous with ἀληθεία, which in these letters refers to the apostolic gospel, or perhaps more generally to the body of Christian doctrine with the gospel at its core (e.g., 1 Tim 2:4, 7; 4:3; 1 Thess 3:2; Phlm 1, 24).

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24 Lorenz Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge. Kommentar zum Zweiten Timotheusbrief, HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 94, argues that the positive usage reflects a non-Pauline propensity: “Ein Blick auf des Zeugnis der authentischen Paulusbriefe zeigt erneut den Unterschied. Mit einer negativen Kennzeichnung verbunden, steht ἐργάτης 2 Kor 11,13 und Phil 3,2 für ein von Paulus verurteiltes Wirken fremder Missionare.” But this is not necessarily so. It could be argued that the other uses of ἐργάτης are ironic, and that Paul’s normal term, συνεργός (Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 1:24; 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; 1 Thess 3:2; Phlm 1, 24), is used when he writes of coworkers, but here in 2 Timothy he writes a personal paraenetic letter to a coworker, which means the partnership is understood and the “co-” is therefore unnecessary. Thus, Paul speaks of Timothy as a συνεργός in 1 Thess 3:2, but he speaks to Timothy as an ἐργάτης in 2 Tim 2:15.

25 With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 255; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 411; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 748.

26 Houlden, The Pastoral Epistles, 121, mistakenly says the verb occurs in Prov 5:6.

27 BDAG, s.v. “ἀρθοτομεῖω.”
3:15; 6:5; 2 Tim 2:15; 4:4; Titus 1:14). Literally, then, the final part of 2 Tim 2:15 may be translated: “rightly/straightly cutting the word of truth.”

Calvin calls this a fine metaphor, which accurately explains the purpose of teaching. He writes, “Paul assigns to teachers the duty of carving or dividing the Word, like a father dividing the bread into small pieces to feed his children.” But the ambiguity of the expression has led a number of recent commentators to suggest that the original sense of “cutting” has dissipated, and the emphasis lies on doing something correctly; thus, Timothy is “to correctly handle” (NIV) or “to rightly explain” (NRSV) the word of truth. The rarity of the word ὀρθοτομέω makes it nearly impossible to understand Paul’s precise meaning here, but the general idea is clear enough. Paul has just warned about getting sidetracked in the opponents’ word wars (λογομαχέω, v. 14), and he will next call the community to turn away from the false teachers’ message (περιστήμη, v. 16), so the accent indeed falls on the prefix ὀρθ-, which here probably means “straight.” Timothy is to be a straightforward communicator of the word of truth; he is to guide the gospel directly to the people, rather than wandering into the cul-de-sac of conjecture, where the opponents are located.

3. Negative: Avoid the Ungodly and Deadly Teaching of the Opponents (vv. 16-17a)

The prohibition of v. 14 is recapitulated in v. 16a, though in v. 14 Timothy is to urge others away from the wrangling of the opponents, while here it is the delegate himself who is to turn away from the false teaching (περιστήμη). The verb περιστήμη occurs three other times in the NT (John 11:42; Acts 25:7; Titus 3:9, in the context of opponents). The term here means “to go around so as to avoid” (see also Josephus, Ant.

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29 Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 2:15.
30 See, for example, Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 255; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 411-412; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 676; TLNT, s.v. “ὀρθοτομέω.”
31 Similarly, Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, 160; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 749; Witherington, A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John, 336: “Timothy is to speak directly and clearly about the words of truth, to get right to the point, or as we might say now, ‘cut to the chase.’” Contra Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 385, who finds medical imagery in the term, but this seems contrived.
32 Though Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 750, suggests the point is not simply that Timothy is to refrain from participating in the opponents’ disputes but probably also that he is to prohibit this sort of involvement.
The verb is equivalent to ἐκτρέπω, which Paul has used in the context of opponents three times (1 Tim 1:6; 5:15; 6:20), and which will occur again in 2 Tim 4:4. With his first use of ἐκτρέπω, Paul established a process of deviation: 1) the opponents have missed the mark (ἀστοχέω) of a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, 2) because of this they have turned (ἐκτρέπω) to a goal of their own devising, and 3) Paul refers to the opponents’ point of arrival as “empty speech” (ματαιολογία). In 1 Tim 6:20-21, using identical or similar terms, Paul provided a plan for his delegate: 1) where the opponents have missed the mark (ἀστοχέω) of the faith, Timothy has received the gospel (παραθηκή), 2) because of this Timothy must turn (ἐκτρέπω) from the false teaching, and 3) Paul refers to the false teaching as “profane empty sounds” (τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας). Here in 2 Tim 2:15-16, a similar plan is laid out: 1) Timothy is the transmitter of the gospel (τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας), 2) therefore he must avoid (περιστημῖ) the false teaching, and 3) Paul again refers to the false teaching as “profane empty sounds” (τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας). The opponents’ message is godless and, therefore, powerless, which explains why it is in this pericope said to lead to the eschatological ruin of those who hear and receive it.34

Paul next provides a reason (γάρ) for his prohibition; Timothy is to avoid the chatter of the opponents because “they will advance further in ungodliness” (ἐπὶ πλεῖον προκόψουσιν ἀσεβείας). The subject of the verb προκόψουσιν is the antecedent of αὐτῶν and ὧν, which are specified by the names of two of the opponents (v. 17); thus, here in v. 16b it is the purveyors of the empty message who are said to be advancing.35 προκόπτω (“to move forward”)36 occurs three times in 2 Timothy (2:16; 3:9, 13; see also Rom 13:12; Gal 1:14). In 2 Tim 3:9, the verb also refers to the false teachers, though there Paul declares that the opponents “will not advance far” (οὐ προκόψουσιν ἐπὶ πλεῖον). In 3:9, Paul expresses his confidence that the false teachers’ influence in the Christian community will be to some degree limited (discussed further below), while here in 2:16 he ironically states that the opponents themselves will progress in profanity. The term

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33 BDAG, s.v. “περιστημ.”
34 See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:20-21 in chapter two.
35 With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 255; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 413; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 750; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 677; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 523n41.
36 BDAG, s.v. “προκόπτω.”
ἀσέβεια occurs four times in the Pauline writings (undisputed: Rom 1:18; 11:26; disputed: 2 Tim 2:16; Titus 2:12). ἐσέβεια, the ongoing translation of the apostolic gospel into behavior that is pleasing to God, is the path of eschatological existence/eternal life.\(^{37}\) The opponents claim to be “godly” in order to make a profit (1 Tim 6:5), but they actually exemplify the direct opposite—“ungodliness.”\(^{38}\) Thus, theirs is the pathway to destruction (v. 14).

The coordinating καί joins v. 17a to v. 16b as a second reason for the command issued to Timothy (περιστασεῖς). Paul now indicates that, as the opponents themselves advance in ἀσέβεια, their doctrine will spread, wreaking havoc on the community of faith. Having just referred to the apostolic gospel as “the word of truth” (τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, v. 15), Paul here refers to the opponents’ message as “their word” (ὁ λόγος αὐτῶν), underscoring the fact that theirs is a message void of ἀληθεία. This deceitful teaching, Paul says, “will spread like a deadly disease” (ὡς γάγγραινα νομὴν ἔζει). νομὴ is literally “pasturage” (e.g., John 10:9; 1 Chr 4:39; Joel 1:18; the term is common in the LXX), but from this literal meaning of νομή developed the figurative sense “spread,” as in the spreading of a disaster or a disease. The development was a natural one: a disease spreads like an animal moving across grazing land (Galen, *De Simpl.* 9). Josephus writes of Jews who “cut off those limbs of their body which were infected, in order to prevent the distemper’s spreading (νομὴ) farther” (B.J. 6.164; see also 6.167, where the term refers to the spreading of a fire).\(^{39}\) Here in 2 Tim 2:17, Paul likens the opponents’ message to γάγγραινα, which is “a disease involving severe inflammation, which if left unchecked can become a destructive ulcerous condition.”\(^{40}\) Paul’s image is unforgettable: the gangrenous doctrine is eating its way into the body of believers, so Timothy himself must beware of infection (vv. 16-17a), and he must urge others to do the same (v. 14).\(^{41}\)

4. Description: The Opponents Diverge from the Apostolic Gospel by Claiming the Resurrection is Past (vv. 17b-18)

\(^{37}\) See the discussion of 1 Tim 4:8 in chapter four.

\(^{38}\) With Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 385.


\(^{40}\) BDAG, s.v. “γάγγραινα.”

\(^{41}\) Haufe, “Gnostische Irrlehre und ihre Abwehr in den Pastoralbriefen,” 325–339, finds enough evidence in 2 Tim 2:17 to suggest that the opponents are an organized and aggressive group.
To demonstrate that the danger in the Christian community is a reality, not just a possibility, Paul draws attention to two men from among the larger group of false teachers (ὁν ἐστιν Ὄμέναιος καὶ Φιλητος). Philetus is mentioned only here. A man by the name of Hymenaeus is mentioned with an Alexander in 1 Tim 1:20, and most commentators assume that the Hymenaeus here in 2 Tim 2:17 is the same man referred to in the earlier text. Since Hymenaeus appears to be an uncommon name, this is likely, but not certain, and there is no way of knowing for sure that the men singled out here were leaders of the opposition. If this is the same man from 1 Tim 1:20, then the disciplinary measures taken by Paul have not yet led to Hymenaeus’ alignment with the apostolic gospel, and, though he has been removed from the fellowship, he is still able to influence some individuals within the church (2 Tim 2:18b). Both he and Philetus are here described as men “who have missed the mark with respect to the truth” (ὀἵτινες περὶ τὴν ἀληθείαν ἠστόχησαν). This is the third occurrence of ἀστοχέω in the PD (1 Tim 1:6; 6:21; 2 Tim 2:18). The verb is used only of the opponents. In 1 Tim 1:5-6, Paul explains that the opponents have “missed the mark” (ἀστοχέω) of the triad of inward faculties that produce ἀγάπη; they are incapable of living the sort of life that is pleasing to God. In 1 Tim 6:21, it is said that the false teachers have “missed the mark with respect to the faith” (περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἠστόχησαν). The preposition περὶ, which occurs with the accusative in both 1 Tim 6:21 and 2 Tim 2:18, means “concerning.” “The faith” (1 Tim 6:21) and “the truth” (2 Tim 2:18) both refer to the objective content of the Christian faith. With respect to the accepted Christian doctrine, the opponents have deviated.

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42 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 751; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 157: “Singling out named individuals gives concreteness to the warning.”
43 See, for example, Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 111; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 256; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 413; Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 151; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 751; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 679; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 527; Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 232; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 157.
44 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 256; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 527.
45 See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:20 in chapter two.
46 Contra Cranford, “Encountering Heresy,” 37, who claims that the continued activity of Hymenaeus is evidence that 1 Tim 1:20 does not refer to his excommunication. In light of the parallel text in 1 Cor 5, however, Cranford’s interpretation is unlikely (see the discussion of 1 Tim 1:18-20 in chapter two).
47 BDAG, s.v. “περὶ”; Harris, Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament, 180.
48 The aorist form of ἀστοχέω is used in both 1 Tim 6:21 and 2 Tim 2:18, signifying that the deviation has already taken place (see also ἐναυάγησαν in 1 Tim 1:19).
In v. 18b, Paul highlights a particular doctrinal divergence. λέγοντες modifies the verb ἠστόχησαν, and probably should be construed as a participle of means (“they missed the mark by saying”). λέγω here has a didactic force, as evidenced by the doctrinal nature of the speech (τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἤδη γεγονέναι) and the “successful” educational outcome (καὶ ἀνατρέπουσιν τὴν τινων πίστιν). τὴν ἀνάστασιν (“the resurrection”) is most likely the original reading, as it has strong textual support (A C D K L P Ψ etc.). Misconceptions about the resurrection were fairly common in the early church. Some believers in Corinth were insisting, “there is no resurrection of the dead” (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν, 1 Cor 15:12). But the problem in Ephesus was not a denial of ἀνάστασις; rather, as ἤδη γεγονέναι indicates, the opponents were declaring: “the resurrection has already taken place.” While this has been called the very center of the opponents’ teaching, the statement itself is rather vague. To clarify the claim, three questions need to be considered. What exactly is meant by “resurrection”? In what sense had this resurrection been realized? How did this view of the resurrection arise?

First, what is the precise meaning of ἀνάστασις? The undisputed Paul sometimes uses ἀνάστασις specifically of Christ’s resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4; 6:5; Phil 3:10), though this cannot be the sole referent here, for Paul would have had no objections to the claim that Christ had been raised. ἀνάστασις must refer here to the believer’s resurrection (see also 1 Cor 15:12, 13, 21, 42). However, it would have been nonsensical to maintain that the resurrection of the body had come to pass. In what sense, then, did the

49 With Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 414.
50 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 99.
52 See also 2 Thess 2:2; Pol. Phil. 7.1; 2 Clem 9.1; Irenaeus, Haer. 1.23.5; and the additional references in Lane, “1 Tim. IV 1-3,” 165n4. A curious view of the resurrection is found in the Acts of Paul and Thecla: Demas and Hermogenes offer to teach Thamyris “about the resurrection which [Paul] says is to come, that it has already taken place in the children whom we have and that we rise again, after having come to the knowledge of the true God” (14). See the brief discussion of the Acts of Paul and Thecla in chapter two.
53 James D. Miller, The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents, SNTSMS 93 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 114, argues that the reference to a specific heresy is out of place here. However, Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 171, retorts: “It is entirely logical to follow a warning with a specific illustration (or manifestation) of what has been warned against.”
54 See, for example, Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 98; Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 280; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 526.
opponents in Ephesus claim the resurrection of believers had already taken place? The most likely solution is that they immaterialized the resurrection. For the opponents, \( \alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\sigma\varsigma \) seems to be a past, purely spiritual event.

Third, and most importantly, how did this understanding of the resurrection arise? Since the opponents seem to have come from within the Pauline community in Ephesus, their teaching about the resurrection should probably be understood as a distortion of Pauline doctrine. In my view, the most likely scenario is that the opponents misconstrued Paul’s teaching of the present new life in Christ, claiming that the only resurrection was the mystical resurrection, which took place at conversion/baptism. N.T. Wright says that Paul’s understanding of resurrection comprises three “moments”: 1) the bodily resurrection of Jesus, 2) the future bodily resurrection of those who belong to

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55 Some scholars make connections between 2 Tim 2:18 and later “Gnostic” ideas or sources, especially Treatise on the Resurrection (also known as the Epistle to Rheginos). See, for example, Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 246; Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 112; Donelson, Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles, 122, who speaks only of the opponents’ “Gnostic” coloring; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 98. In his weighty tome, The Resurrection of the Son of God, Wright discusses the doctrine of resurrection in various Nag Hammadi tractates. He concludes: “‘Resurrection,’ in the main sense that we have seen the word and its cognates used in the first two centuries of Christianity, is in these texts either denied or radically reinterpreted. If ‘resurrection’ is seen as in any sense a return, at some point after death, to a full bodily life, it is denied. If (as in the Epistle to Rheginos) the language of resurrection is retained, it is reinterpreted so that it no longer refers in any sense to the bodily events of either ultimate resurrection or moral obedience in this life, but rather to non-bodily religious experience during the present life and/or non-bodily post-mortem survival and exaltation” (547, emphasis original). While the basic idea of immaterial religious experience in the present life appears to be what we find in the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus, we must beware of reading the complexities of Treatise on the Resurrection (see Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 538-541) back into the PD, especially since the tractate is generally agreed to be no earlier than the late second century C.E.

56 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 152.

57 See especially the discussion of 1 Tim 1:3-7 in chapter two.

58 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 392: “The charge clearly identifies the opponents as Christian, since a ‘realized resurrection’ is scarcely conceivable among any group other than the Christian at this time.” Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 221, refers to the resurrection doctrine as “a (perhaps deliberate) misunderstanding of Paul’s teaching.” Martin, Pauli Testamentum, 229, admits, “It does not seem possible to trace the accusation that Hymenaeus and Philetus hold that the resurrection is past already to any Jewish doctrine preserved in the sources.” Because Martin wants to emphasize the Jewish nature of the opposition, he has no choice but to downplay the resurrection teaching: “An issue over authority is presented here in the guise of an issue over doctrine” (229, emphasis added).
Jesus, and 3) “the anticipation of the second, on the basis of the first, in terms of present Christian living, to which ‘resurrection’ language applies as a powerful metaphor.”\(^{59}\) The life of the believer is already, metaphorically, one of “resurrection,” referring in Paul to the forgiveness of sins and to a new pattern of behavior.\(^{60}\) I suggest it is this notion of the present new life in Christ that the opponents misconstrued.

A vibrant imagination is not required to picture the distortion of Pauline ideas, such as “we have been buried (συνετάφημεν) with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν, Rom 6:4), “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: everything old has passed away (παρῆλθεν); see, everything has become new” (γέγονεν καινά, 2 Cor 5:17), “God who is rich in mercy… made us alive together with Christ” (συνζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ, Eph 2:5), and “when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him” (συνηγέρθητε, Col 2:12).\(^{61}\) Given the prominence of this type of resurrection/new life language in Paul’s letters, the Pauline community in Ephesus probably would have been exposed to similar ideas. Furthermore, the immediate context suggests that a misinterpretation of Pauline doctrine lies behind 2 Tim 2:18. The hymn contained in 2:8-13 affirms the doctrine of present participation in Christ’s death and resurrection taught elsewhere by Paul, but simultaneously it stresses the incomplete nature of this participation (discussed further below). This is probably a corrective measure.

Towner has argued that the Pauline teaching of present participation in Christ’s death and resurrection had been misunderstood by the opponents, and that this led to a confusion of the times: the false teachers in Ephesus saw themselves living only in the age to come, rather than in the overlap of the ages.\(^{62}\) This appears to explain many of the issues I have unearthed in the letters thus far. Believing they had been projected into the

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\(^{60}\) See the discussion in Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 236–240.


age to come, the opponents sought to do away with marriage (1 Tim 4:3), since, according to Paul, marriage is fitting only for the old order (e.g., 1 Cor 7:29-31). The opponents spoke evil of motherhood (1 Tim 2:15), probably because they considered the maternal life to be inappropriate for a woman living “in the resurrection.” The dissolution of marriage would have meant that women no longer had a traditional role in the home, which perhaps led them also to disregard their place in the house of God (1 Tim 2:11-12). It also seems likely that the opponents expanded some of Paul’s teaching on food (e.g., Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 8:1-13), contending that some foods were profane, or at least spiritually insignificant (an eschatological dualism). Additionally, I have suggested that it is because the opponents thought themselves to be citizens of the age to come that they claimed a special γνώσις (1 Tim 6:20). Perhaps misinterpreting Paul’s teaching about a future, more complete knowledge (e.g., 1 Cor 13:12), the false teachers claimed the ability to offer “new” readings of the law (1 Tim 1:7), which Paul classifies as “myths” (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7). Most (if not all) elements of the opponents’ teaching uncovered thus far seem to be connected to the eschatological misconception that surfaces here in 2 Tim 2:18.

To summarize this misconception, it seems that 2 Tim 2:18 reflects a distortion of the doctrine of present participation in Christ’s death and resurrection; the opponents perverted Paul’s teaching, immaterializing ἀνάστασις and asserting that it had been fully realized, which meant they thought themselves to be current citizens of the age to come. This would have been tantamount to denying the future, bodily resurrection, which for Paul is the equivalent of denying the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:12-19). In Pauline theology, Christ’s resurrection is no isolated phenomenon; the risen Christ is “the first fruits of those who have died” (1 Cor 15:20). Christ’s bodily resurrection is the beginning of a much greater harvest. Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is no trivial detail; it is an integral part of the gospel message (1 Cor 15:13). As Hays explains, “There is no

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63 See the discussion of 1 Tim 2:15 in chapter three.
64 See the discussion of 1 Tim 4:3 in chapter two.
65 See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:20 in chapter two.
66 Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction*, 42–43, says that the opponents’ fundamental error was soteriological in nature: “Their understanding about salvation had undergone a shift, from a hope of completion in the eschatological future to a conviction that completion was a present reality.”
67 Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 527: “The preaching of the bodily resurrection is a central element in Paul’s theology. To deny the bodily resurrection is to deny Christ’s resurrection, and if Christ is not raised, then the gospel message is empty (1 Cor 15:12-
authentic Christian faith without fervent eschatological hope, and there is no authentic eschatological hope without the resurrection of the dead.”

It is for this reason that Paul can say in the final part of 2 Tim 2:18 that Hymenaeus and Philetus are “upsetting the faith of some.” The verb ἀνατρέπω means literally “to overthrow” and figuratively “to upset” or “to throw into confusion” (e.g., John 2:15; Titus 1:11; Prov 10:3 LXX; Josephus, Ant. 1.118; Philo, Post. 181; Diodorus Siculus 1.77.2). With πίστις as the object here, the verb should be understood in the figurative sense. The false teaching about the resurrection has caused a serious disturbance in Ephesus; some individuals have lost their grasp of the fundamental Christian message.

B. Though Faithful Individuals and Imposters Coexist in the Church, the Lord Knows Those Who Truly Belong to Him (vv. 19-21)

1. The True Church is Certain to Stand Firm (v. 19)

Verse 19 contains the first of two images designed to bolster Timothy’s confidence as he ministers amid the false teachers in Ephesus. The uncommon conjunction μέντοι (“nevertheless” or “however”) connects v. 19 to the previous thought. Despite the fact that the opponents have caused a crisis in the community, “the firm foundation of God still stands” (ὁ στερεὸς θεμέλιος τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστηκεν). The noun θεμέλιος (“foundation”) is found seven times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: Rom 15:20; 1 Cor 3:10, 11, 12; disputed: Eph 2:20; 1 Tim 6:19; 2 Tim 2:19). There is a fair amount of flexibility with respect to the referent of the term. In 1 Cor 3:11, Christ is...
identified as the θεμέλιος. In Eph 2:20, the term is applied to the apostles and prophets. Here in 2 Tim 2:19 there is no good reason to think that either is specifically in mind. The sayings of the seal (discussed below) indicate that θεμέλιος here is a synecdoche of the species; the part, “foundation,” is put for the whole, “building,” and the building refers to the church, which was in 1 Tim 3:15 called “the house of God” (οἶκῳ θεοῦ... ἥτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος), and which will be compared to a “great house” (μεγάλῃ οἰκίᾳ) in 2 Tim 2:20-21. The adjective στερεός (Heb 5:12, 14; 1 Pet 5:9) emphasizes the stability of the church in the face of opposition, even the sort of opposition that upsets the faith of some.

Paul next says that the church of God bears a seal (ἐχωτὶν τὴν σφραγίδα ταύτην). Quinn and Wacker explain, “The seal in the ancient world at large had its whole meaning from its relation to the owner. His seal openly claimed some thing as his own, within his power, accessible to him and those duly authorized by him but secret from others, something (for a reason perhaps known only to the person who sealed it) costly and precious.” The term σφραγίς can refer either to the instrument used for sealing/stamping or to the impression made by the instrument. The latter is clearly intended in this case, but since the impression appears on a foundation, the idea must be of an inscription or an engraving. By selecting the word θεμέλιος to refer to the church as a whole and by locating the σφραγίς on the θεμέλιος, Paul emphasizes God as the founder. From its

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74 Houlden, The Pastoral Epistles, 122.
75 Many scholars take θεμέλιος as a reference to the church. See, for example, Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 249; Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:759; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 101; Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 153; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 415; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 755. Marshall classifies θεμέλιος as a metonymy, but, since the foundation is more strictly connected to the building, θεμέλιος is better classified as a synecdoche. Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 686, argue that the apostolic gospel is the foundation and the community of believers stands on this foundation. Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 2:19, finds in the foundation imagery a reference to God’s election. Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 257, claims that no specific point of reference is intended; the general point is the certainty of eschatological triumph for those who belong to God.
76 With Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 153.
77 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 687. See also the discussion and references in Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 387; Fitzer, TDNT, s.v. “σφραγίς.”
78 BDAG, s.v. “σφραγίς.”
79 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 756; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 158.
inception, the church has been God’s property; thus, it has always been under his protection.

The inscription on the foundation of the church reads: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.” The first saying can be confidently ascribed to Num 16:5, though there are interesting differences between the MT, the LXX, and Paul’s citation. In Num 16, Korah and his company, Levites to whom the privilege of priesthood had not been given, challenge Moses and Aaron. According to the MT, Moses responds to the rebellion: “the LORD will make known who is his” (Num 16:5). ἡσσιντοι occurs with the hiphil imperfect form of וַיְדַע (“to know”), indicating the incompleteness of the action of the LORD’s revelation. It is when the ground opens its mouth and swallows up Korah’s company that the congregation “will know” (בָּאָדְּמָה as a prophetic perfect) that these men despised the LORD (Num 16:30). According to Num 16:5 LXX, Moses responds to the uprising: “God knows those who are his.” ὁ θεὸς occurs with the aorist form of γινώσκω (“to know”). In the LXX, the stress falls not on the divine revelation of knowledge but on the divine knowledge itself. Paul follows the LXX, using the aorist form of the verb γινώσκω, though he refers specifically to the knowledge of the Lord (κύριος). The

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80 See the discussion in Martin, Pauli Testamentum, 19–21; Wolfe, “The Sagacious Use of Scripture,” 201–204; Oropeza, Jews, Gentiles, and the Opponents of Paul, 287–291.
81 Oropeza, Jews, Gentiles, and the Opponents of Paul, 288–290, argues that, because Korah was a prominent Levite among God’s people, the opponents were probably once leaders within the Christian community in Ephesus. But Richard J. Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, WBC (Waco: Word, 1983), 77–84, has demonstrated that there was a well-established tradition that employed OT characters such as Korah as negative examples, highlighting the incompatibility of God’s true people and evil. In light of this tradition, the connection between Korah and the opponents in Ephesus may not be as specific as Oropeza claims.
82 Hanson, Studies in the Pastoral Epistles, 35–36, emphasizes the aspect of revolt in Num 16. Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 268, connects the specific rebellion of Dathan and Abiram, which was to deny that the hope of a land flowing with milk and honey would ever come true (Num 16:12–14), to the way Hymenaeus and Philetus challenged the promise of future resurrection.
83 Though as in the MT, the emphasis in v. 28 and in v. 30 is on the revelation of God’s knowledge (“you will know”).
84 κύριος occurs without the article in 2 Tim 2:24 as well: Timothy is a διάδοχος κυρίου. Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 533n89, writes: “It is doubtful whether the presence or absence of the definite article with κύριος is a valid criterion for determining a reference to Christ or God. κύριος without the definite article is frequent in the LXX and typical in Numbers.”
otherwise identical wording (ἐγνω κύριος τοὺς ὄντας αὐτοῦ, 2 Tim 2:19; ἔγνω ὁ θεὸς τοὺς ὄντας αὐτοῦ, Num 16:5 LXX) suggests that Paul knew the account in the LXX well, and that he intentionally altered ὁ θεὸς to κύριος, perhaps simply because he knew the Hebrew as well, but more likely because he wanted to draw attention to the fact that Christ, having purchased a people for his own possession (Titus 2:14), knows personally the blood-bought remnant.⁸⁵

The second part of the inscription, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness” (ἀποστήτω ἀπὸ ἀδίκιας πᾶς ὁ ὄνομάξων τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου), is a compilation of biblical texts.⁸⁶ The most likely sources are Isa 26:13 and Num 16:26-27 LXX. The Isaiah text reads: “O Lord our God, take possession of us: O Lord, we know not any other: we name your name” (κύριε ὁ θεός ἡμῶν, κτήσαι ἡμᾶς- κύριε, ἐκτὸς σοῦ ἄλλον οὐκ οἴδαμεν, τὸ ὄνομά σου ὄνομάξομεν). The confession signifies covenant membership.⁸⁷ The other part of the saying, ἀποστήτω ἀπὸ ἀδίκιας, echoes Num 16:26-27. A call for separation precedes the judgment of Korah and his company: “[Moses] said to the congregation, ‘Separate yourselves from the tents of these wicked men, and touch

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⁸⁵ See the discussion in Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 687–689; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 532–533. Thomas C. Oden, First and Second Timothy and Titus, IBC (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 70, says: “The believer may rest secure in God’s own eternal recollection and ability to distinguish the true from the false. This is a consolation for those who may otherwise be troubled by the false and unworthy elements in the visible church.” Bultmann, TDNT, s.v. “γινώσκω,” suggests that γινώσκω here refers to God’s election. Augustine uses 2 Tim 2:19 frequently to support his view of election. See, for example, Corrept. 7.16: “It is the elect who are meant in the letter to Timothy, where, after mention of the attempts of Hymenaeus and Philetus to undermine the faith, the text goes on, ‘The Lord knows those who are his.’ The faith of these latter, which works through charity, either does not ever fail, or, if it fail in some, the loss is repaired before death, the sin that intervened is blotted out and perseverance to the end is granted.”

⁸⁶ See, for example, Bassler, I Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 153, who suggests Job 36:10; Isa 26:13; 52:1; Sir 17:26; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 387, who suggests Isa 26:13; 52:11; Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 235, who suggests Isa 26:13; Sir 17:26; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 158–159, who suggests Isa 26:13; Sir 35:5. For a discussion of these and other passages to which Paul might be alluding, see Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 534-537; Wolfe, “The Sagacious Use of Scripture,” 202-203.

⁸⁷ Though see Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 758, who contends for an echo of Lev 24:16 (ὄνομάξων ὃς τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου θανάτῳ θανατοῦσθω). In this case, the reference would be to using the name of God blasphemously, and the entirety of the second saying would be a warning to the false teachers in Ephesus: the blasphemers (πᾶς ὁ ὄνομάξων τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου) must depart from unrighteousness (ἀποστήτω ἀπὸ ἀδίκιας) before it is too late.
nothing of theirs, or you will be swept away for all their sins.’ So they got away (ἀφίστημι) from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.” Though the term ἁδικία is not found in Num 16:26-27, the Korah narrative certainly illustrates the concept of “unrighteousness” or “wickedness.” As the congregation was to disassociate itself from the dwellings of the wicked party of Korah, so the faithful Christian community in Ephesus is to avoid the profanity of Hymenaeus, Philetus, and the other false teachers in the church who are progressing in ungodliness (2 Tim 2:16).

The two sayings of the inscription appear to be the fruits of Paul’s Christological reading of Num 16 for the church in Ephesus. Paul first cites Num 16:5 LXX, a text with which he was well acquainted, specifically referencing the Lord (κύριος), for it is Christ who knows personally the true church in Ephesus (compare 2 Tim 2:10-13). Paul next extracts the essence of Num 16:26-27, though he imports language from Isa 26:13 in order to add specificity to the congregation of Num 16: the covenant community is composed of those who “name the name of the Lord.” It is the new-covenant community in Ephesus, that is, those who name the name of the Lord Jesus (e.g., Rom 10:13; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22), who must depart from the wickedness of the opponents.

2. There is Hope for the Transformation of Imposters (vv. 20-21)

The sayings on the church imply that some who claim to be part of the community of Christ do not actually belong to him. In vv. 20-21, this ecclesial conundrum is made explicit. Paul follows the synecdoche of v. 19 with a hypocatastasis; the church, having just been called a foundation, is now implicitly compared to “a great house” (μεγάλη οἰκία). Within the house are “instruments” (σκεύος), which here signify individuals. Similar language is used in Rom 9:19-26 (ὁ μὲν εἰς τιμήν σκεύος ὁ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν, v. 21),

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88 With Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 537.
89 With a number of interpreters, including, Augustine, Bapt. 4.12; Theodore of Mopsuestia, Comm. 2 Tim 2:20; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 417; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 104; Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 154; Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 116. Contra Chrysostom, Hom. 2 Tim 2:20, who claims that the great house refers not to the church only, but to the world at large.
90 BDAG, s.v. “σκεύος”: “a human being exercising a function.”
91 A number of scholars argue that the author of the PD has been influenced by the vessel imagery of Rom 9:21, which may have been first drawn from Wis 15:7: Καὶ γὰρ κεραμεὺς ἀπαλὴν γῆν ἐλίβων ἐπίμυκχον πλάσσει πρὸς υπηρεσίαν ἥμων ἐν ἑκάστον· ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πυλοῦ ἀνεπλάσατο τά τε τῶν καθαρῶν ἔργων δούλα σκεύη τά τε ἐναντία, πάντα ὁμοίως· τούτων δὲ ἔτερου τις ἑκάστου ἑστὶν ἡ χρῆσις, κριτῆς ὁ πηλουργός. See the
though the imagery is put to a different use here. There is also some resemblance to 1 Cor 12:14-26, but there is no evidence in the immediate context of 2 Tim 2:20 to suggest that the allusion here is to different gifts and services within the church. Here, the instruments are sorted: 1) according to material (οὐκ ἔστιν μόνον σκεῦη χρυσά καὶ ἀργυρά ἀλλὰ καὶ ξύλινα καὶ ὀστράξινα), and 2) according to purpose (καὶ ἢ μὲν εἰς τιμήν ἢ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν). Throughout the entire pericope, Paul juxtaposes Timothy/the faithful Christian community and Hymenaeus and Philetus/the false teachers. For this reason, the most probable interpretation of v. 20 is that only two types of instruments are in view: 1) expensive instruments for honorable use, and 2) inexpensive instruments for dishonorable use. The arrangement according to material is preparatory and appears to be of little consequence. It is purpose that is reiterated in v. 21, and it is only the instrument for honorable use that is mentioned a second time. This suggests that the primary, and perhaps only, point of comparison intended is that, just as the master has some instruments for honorable use within his house, so Christ has some individuals for honorable use within his church.

The picture that admits to the presence of imposters in the church is immediately followed by a call for cleansing: “Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be an instrument for honorable use” (ἐὰν οὖν τις ἐκκαθαίρῃ ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦτων, ἔσται σκεῦος εἰς τιμήν). The verb ἐκκαθαίρω is found in the NT only here and in 1 Cor 5:7.

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92 For a discussion of the significance of these materials in the ancient world, see Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 759-760.

93 In this final part of v. 20, the preposition εἰς expresses purpose. See Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, 84.

94 The Greek of v. 20 is somewhat ambiguous, so there is some dispute over exactly how many categories of instruments are introduced. Paul could also be referring to four categories: 1) expensive instruments for honorable use, 2) expensive instruments for dishonorable use, 3) inexpensive instruments for honorable use, and 4) inexpensive instruments for dishonorable use. It is more likely, however, that the latter twofold division (καὶ ἢ μὲν... ἢ δὲ) further specifies the former twofold division (οὐκ ἔστιν μόνον... ἀλλὰ καὶ), creating only two categories. Thus, v. 20 should be translated as follows. “And in a great house there are not only gold and silver instruments, but also wood and clay instruments, the former for honorable use, and the latter for dishonorable use.”

95 Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 540, rightly says, “[Paul] does not intend the reader the explore all conceivable permutations the picture might yield.” In a great house, are there not clay bowls that contain delicacies? Are there not gold-plated chamber pots? But to be distracted by such inquiries is surely to miss the point of the hypocatastasis.
In the 1 Corinthians passage, Paul, having received word that a member of the Christian community in Corinth is committing a grotesque form of sexual sin (5:1), calls for the rebellious man to be disciplined (5:3-5), and then scolds the community as a whole for their complicity in the matter: “Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out (ἐκκαθαίρω) the old yeast so that you may be a new batch” (5:6-7). Allowing the rebellious man to remain in the church will contaminate the entire community; thus, he is to be “cleaned out” or “removed as unclean.”

In 2 Tim 2:21, ἐκκαθαίρω refers not to the removal of some unclean person from the community, but to separation from certain unclean teaching within the community. The division into two types of instruments (v. 20) is now replaced by an open proposition: “anyone” can “cleanse himself from these things” (ἐὰν οὖν τις ἐκκαθάρῃ ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦτων). The prepositional phrase ἀπὸ τοῦτων refers to the false teaching that has been discussed previously in this pericope. One who removes himself entirely from the profanity in Ephesus will become an “instrument for honorable use” (σκῦος εἰς τιμὴν), that is, an individual who has been set apart by God (ἡγιασμένον) and who is therefore capable of pleasing him (εὐχρηστὸν τῷ δεσπότῃ, εἰς πᾶν ἔργον ἄγαθὸν ἡτοιμασμένον). The same link between purification and productivity is found in Titus 2:14: “[Christ] gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people for his own possession (καὶ καθαρίσῃ ἑαυτῷ λαὸν περιούσιον) who are zealous for good works (ζηλωτὴν καλῶν ἔργων).” Located between the Christological reading of Num 16 and the call for Timothy to correct the opponents with gentleness (2

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96 BDAG, s.v. “ἐκκαθαίρω”; Hauck, TDNT, s.v. “ἐκκαθαίρω.”

97 See Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:763; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 262; Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 154; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 397–398.

98 See the discussion of honor and honorable behavior in Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 106–127.

99 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 532, points out that the passive voice is in line with Paul’s normal usage, indicating that God is effecting sanctification. Within the parameters of the PD, ἁγιάζω occurs only here and in 1 Tim 4:5 (see the discussion in chapter two).

100 The final two phrases highlight the outward life. εὐχρηστὸς pertains to being “useful” or “serviceable.” See BDAG, s.v. “εὐχρηστός.” Additionally, a “good work” (ἔργον ἄγαθὸν) is a God-honoring action, capable of being performed only by those whom God has inwardly transformed. See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:5 in chapter two and 1 Tim 2:10, 15 in chapter three.
Tim 2:25-26), Paul is in 2 Tim 2:21 thinking specifically of the conversion of individuals within the opponents’ group. He holds out hope that some of the opponents who have rejected the Christ-centered teaching (1 Tim 6:3) will “name the name of the Lord” and depart from the wickedness of their comrades, thereby demonstrating that actually they are part of the blood-bought remnant (2 Tim 2:19).¹⁰¹

C. The Lord’s Servant Must Be a Tactful Corrector of False Teachers (vv. 22-26)

1. Negative: Do Not Be Disputatious (v. 22a)

After issuing the call for conversion, Paul once again provides a series of commands for Timothy. By watching his way of life and his instruction, the delegate will be instrumental in bringing about the transformation of the opponents. The first command is negative; Timothy is ordered to “flee youthful lusts” (Τὰς δὲ νεωτερικὰς ἐπιθυμίας φεύγε). The verb φεύγω is used three other times in the Pauline corpus; it is always used in the sense of avoiding something because of its potential damage (undisputed: 1 Cor 6:8: Φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν; 10:14: φεύγετε ἀπὸ τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας; disputed: 1 Tim 6:11: ταῦτα φεύγε· διὸς δὲ δικαιοσύνην εὑσσείαν πιστίν, ἀγάπην ὑπομονὴν πραοὺπαλιᾶν).¹⁰²

Here, it is a particular category of desires (ἐπιθυμία)¹⁰³ that is to be avoided. The adjective νεωτερικός means “youthful,”¹⁰⁴ but the rarity of the term in the contemporary literature makes it difficult to know what specific attitudes or behaviors Paul here has in mind. The term occurs once in the NT, once in the LXX (3 Macc 4:8), once in the Apostolic Fathers (Ignatius, Mag. 3.1), and once in Josephus (Ant. 16.399, linked with vanity). Nothing in the context suggests that the reference is to sensual desires.¹⁰⁵ Immediately preceding the references to “debates” and “quarrels” (2 Tim 2:23), the thought is probably, as Fee explains, of the “headstrong passions of youth, who sometimes love novelties, foolish

¹⁰¹ Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 542, writes: “Fulfillment of the [cleansing] requirement qualifies one to belong to the class of faithful believer described with the term ‘implement for honor[able use].' The return to the metaphor might seem confusing if pressed for details, for the picture requires what was once a common object for dishonorable purposes to be transformed into a valuable object for honorable use. What the surprise does, however, is to underline the possibility and importance of change, from wickedness, uncleanness, and dishonor, to godliness.”
¹⁰² BDAG, s.v. “φεύγω.”
¹⁰³ See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:9 in chapter four.
¹⁰⁴ BDAG, s.v. “νεωτερικός.”
discussions, and arguments.” The general point is that the delegate must not be disputatious.

2. Positive: Pursue the Virtues That Characterize the Genuine Believer (v. 22b)

As in 1 Tim 6:11, the command to flee (φεῦγε) from something is followed by a command to pursue (διώκε) something altogether different. Timothy is to seek, first, δικαιοσύνη, which here refers to an upright way of living. Though δικαιοσύνη is a common virtue in Greco-Roman moral teaching, the final part of v. 22 indicates that δικαιοσύνη is used here of the upright life of the Christian believer. Paul indicates in Titus 2:11-12 that it is the grace of God that guides individuals into a new way of life, a life that is “self-controlled, upright (δικαίως), and godly.” The next two virtues, πίστις and ἀγάπη, are often found together in the PD (1 Tim 1:5, 14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Titus 2:2). The one side of the coin, πίστις, refers to belief and ongoing trust in Christ, and the other side, ἀγάπη, refers to faith’s relational outworking in other-oriented service. The final virtue in the list is εἰρήνη, which is found in the PD only here and in the epistolary greetings. Where the opponents revel in debates that breed quarrels (v. 23), Timothy is to pursue harmony in his personal relationships.

The four virtues are to be sought by “those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (τῶν ἐπικαλουμένων τὸν κύριον ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας). The act of calling on the

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106 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 263. See also Kelly, The Pastoral Epistles, 189; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 764; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 696. Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 400, and Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, 154, suggest that the adjective is closely related to a verb that means “to make innovations,” though Bassler admits that this meaning of the adjective is not clearly attested elsewhere until the third century C.E. Compare Wolfgang Metzger, “Die neōterikai epitthymiai in 2. Tim. 2.22,” TZ 33 (1977): 129-136, who argues that νεωτερικὰς ἐπιθυμίας signifies the temperament of the false teachers, not Timothy.

107 BDAG, s.v. “διώκω”: “to strive for” or “to seek after.”


109 See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:5 in chapter two.

110 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 263, says that “the dominating theme [of 2 Tim 2:22-26] is peace.”

111 The second part of v. 22 reads: διώκε δὲ δικαιοσύνην πίστιν ἀγάπην εἰρήνην μετὰ τῶν ἐπικαλουμένων τὸν κύριον ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας. The preposition μετὰ modifies the verb διώκω; Timothy is to “pursue” the four virtues “together with” all genuine believers. μετὰ could also go with εἰρήνη (“pursue peace with genuine believers”), but, since elsewhere in vv. 22-26 Paul clearly indicates his desire for Timothy to avoid
Lord is linked with salvation in Rom 10:13 (πᾶς γὰρ δὲν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σῳβήσεται; citing Joel 3:5 LXX: καὶ ἐσται πᾶς, δὲν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου, σῳβήσεται). Paul begins 1 Corinthians: “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἠμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), both their Lord and ours” (1 Cor 1:2). Only here in the Pauline corpus does the call come specifically “from a pure heart” (ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας). Here, as in 1 Tim 1:5 (τὸ δὲ τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας ἐστὶν ἀγάπη ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας), the thought is of the divine act of cleansing that takes place in the person who has come to faith by the apostolic gospel. Such a person has been rendered capable of pursuing God-pleasing virtues, such as “righteousness, faith, love, and peace.” The further description, ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας, is perhaps added in this case to clarify the fact that, although the opponents are within the church, and although they make specious theological claims (v. 18), they do not profess the Lord from a pure heart. In their current inwardly unclean state, the false teachers are characterized by unrighteousness, and the ones in Ephesus who “name the name of the Lord” are to turn from their ways (v. 19).

3. Negative: Refuse to Take Part in the Opponents’ Uninstructed Debates (v. 23)

Verse 23 recalls v. 16, adding little new information. παραίτηται is roughly equivalent to περιστασιο; see the discussion of 1 Tim 4:7 and 1 Tim 5:11 in chapter four. Timothy is again told to refuse to take part in the opponents’ debates, which are now referred to as “foolish and uninstructed” (µωρᾶς καὶ ἀπαίδευτος). The adjective µωρός is found six times in the Pauline letters (undisputed: 1 Cor 1:25, 27; 3:18; 4:10; disputed: 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9). ἀπαίδευτος occurs only here in the NT, though the term occurs eighteen times in the LXX, four times in the context of foolish speech (Prov 15:12, 14; Sir 20:19, 24). Paul’s point is that, though the opponents desire to teach (1 Tim 1:7), their debates bring no instruction, because their message and disputes with the opponents, a restriction here in v. 22 to being at peace only with the pure of heart is highly unlikely.

112 From παραίτηται; see the discussion of 1 Tim 4:7 and 1 Tim 5:11 in chapter four.
113 For additional references, see Bertram, TDNT, s.v. “µωρός”; TLNT, s.v. “µωρός.”
their means are uninstructed by God’s truth. Debates of this ilk degenerate into battles (γεννῶσιν μάχας).

4. Description: The Lord’s Servant Must Instruct Opponents with Care (vv. 24-25a)

On the contrary (δέ), it is necessary for Timothy not to quarrel (σο δεί μάχεσθαι).

“Not quarreling” does not mean that Timothy is to refrain from responding to the false teaching of the opponents, as the final part of v. 24 and the first part of v. 25 will make clear. The idea, rather, is that the delegate must maintain a calm and gentle posture as he stands against error. Paul identifies Timothy as “a servant of the Lord.” δούλος χυρίου occurs only here in the NT, but the designation occurs several times in the LXX (e.g., Josh 24:29; Judg 2:8; 2 Kings 9:7; 18:12). In Titus 1:1, Paul refers to himself as a δούλος θεοῦ. The more common self-designation is δούλος Χριστοῦ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1). Developed from the OT identification of God’s servants, the designations include the ideas of exclusive allegiance and investment with divine authority. Paul probably uses δούλος χυρίου of Timothy here in 2 Tim 2:24 as a way of returning to the household imagery (vv. 20-21). Timothy owes loyalty to the Lord, and he will demonstrate his allegiance by fulfilling certain assignments within the household of God.

A key responsibility of the servant of the Lord is the proclamation of the apostolic doctrine, as evidenced by the three adjectives—ἤπιος, διδακτικός, and ἀνεξικακός—and the participial phrase, ἐν πραγματείᾳ παιδεύοντα τούς ἀντιδιατίθεντος. First, the servant of the Lord must be “gentle toward all” (ἤπιον πρὸς πάντας). ήπιος is a NT hapax (but see the variant reading at 1 Thess 2:7; Josephus, Ant. 19.265; Philo, Moses 1.72). According to Spicq, the term refers to “a disarming gentleness.” Toward allies and adversaries alike,

114 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 321.
115 With Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 265.
116 Rengstorf, TDNT, s.v. “δούλος.”
118 TLNT, s.v. “ἡπιος,” with additional references.
Timothy must keep a calm attitude, an attitude well suited to pacifying the aggressive.\textsuperscript{119} Theodore of Mopsuestia writes: “It is impossible for adversaries to be conciliated by contention, but teaching with acceptable gentleness often can persuade and soften the hardness of the soul.”\textsuperscript{120} Second, Timothy must be “proficient in teaching” (διδακτικός). Outside the NT (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:24), the adjective διδακτικός is found only in Philo (\textit{Congr.} 35; \textit{Names} 83, 88; \textit{Praem.} 27). The thought here is of a high level of competency in communicating the truth,\textsuperscript{121} which is a requirement of Timothy and of all elders in Ephesus (1 Tim 3:2). The term itself is not used in the list of qualifications for elders in Crete, though the equivalent idea is present in Titus 1:9: an elder must “be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.” Third, Timothy must be “patient” (ἀνεξίκακος). The rare adjective ἀνεξίκακος (only here in the NT; for the noun ἀνεξίκαξια, see Wis 2:19; Josephus, \textit{B.J.} 1.624; Epictetus, \textit{Ench.} 10) is formed from ἀνέχομαι and κακός; it means literally “enduring evil without becoming bitter.”\textsuperscript{122} It is not only necessary for the delegate to be able to teach, but he must also be willing to wait patiently for the teaching to transform the hearers.

Finally, the Lord’s servant must instruct his opponents with meekness (ἐν πραΰτητι παιδεύοντα τοὺς ἀντιδιατιθεμένους). The placement of the prepositional phrase ahead of the participle is emphatic; “gentleness” or “meekness” (πραΰτης)\textsuperscript{123} is again stressed (ἡπιος, v. 24). The verb παιδεύω (see also 1 Tim 1:20) here refers to corrective teaching. Presumably, this corrective teaching will have both a theological and an ethical dimension, since both are awry in the opponents. The adversaries are described by the uncommon verb ἀντιδιατίθημι, which is synonymous with ἀντίκειμαι (1 Tim 1:10; 5:4) and ἀνθίστημι (2 Tim 3:8; 4:15).\textsuperscript{124} The opponents disapprove of, and present an

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. Huizenga, \textit{Moral Education for Women in the Pastoral and Pythagorean Letters}, 276n57, writes: “The Pastorals’ critique of various opponents, and especially their wrong approach to ‘Christian’ education seem almost contradictory to the approach to the opponents proposed in 2 Tim 2:24-26.” Huizenga fails to distinguish between the appropriate forthrightness between \textit{Paul and his delegate} concerning the condition of the opponents and the disarming gentleness \textit{between the delegate and the opponents}, which is, quite clearly, for the purpose of bringing them to a knowledge of the truth (v. 25).


\textsuperscript{121} Smith, \textit{Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,”} 74–75.

\textsuperscript{122} BDAG, s.v. “ἀνεξίκακος”; Grundman, \textit{TDNT}, s.v. “ἀνεξίκακος.”

\textsuperscript{123} BDAG, s.v. “πραΰτης.” See 1 Cor 4:21; 10:1; Gal 5:23; 6:1; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; Titus 3:2.

\textsuperscript{124} L&N 39.1.
alternative to (v. 18), the apostolic gospel. While arguing with the opponents is forbidden (v. 23), it is expected that Timothy will exercise educative influence, though it is clear that God is the one who will give the desired educational outcome (vv. 25b-26).

5. Rationale: The Opponents May Be Rescued (vv. 25b-26)

Finally, Paul provides the reason for the aforementioned disposition: “perhaps God may grant them repentance to a knowledge of truth” (μήποτε δῶῃ αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς μετάνοιαν εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας). μήποτε marks the following clause as an indirect question entertaining a possibility. δίδωμι, here as a subjunctive (matching the subjunctive ἀνανήψωσιν of v. 26), has its common meaning, “to give” or “to grant.”

In this case, that which God may give is μετάνοια. The noun is used only two additional times in the Pauline corpus (Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 7:9), though it is used a total of twenty-two times in the NT (see also the verb μετανοέω, which occurs thirty-four times in the NT). The term literally means “a change of mind,” but in the NT μετάνοια is used for unbelievers and sinners turning to God. Spicq says, “The change is that of the soul, of the whole person (the new creature), who is purified of stains and whose life is transformed.”

Peter relays the response of Cornelius’ household: “God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life” (ποτε ἐδωκεν ὁ θεὸς τῇ μετάνοιᾳ εἰς ζωὴν ἐξώκεν, Acts 11:8). In 2 Tim 2:25 it is said that repentance leads “to a knowledge of truth” (εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας). In 1 Tim 2:4, Paul writes: “[God] desires for all people to be saved, that is, to come to a knowledge of truth” (εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας).

This unique expression emphasizes the cognitive dimension of conversion. ἀληθεία is the body of Christian doctrine with the gospel at the core (see v. 15). ἐπίγνωσις refers to recognition.

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125 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 317–318.
126 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 548n158; BDF §370.3.
127 See the discussion of the textual issue (subjunctive or optative) in Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 745; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 402.
128 BDAG, s.v. “δίδωμι.”
129 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 402.
130 A still helpful discussion of repentance is provided by John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1955), 113-116, who in many ways follows Calvin, Inst. 3.3.5-21 (drawing from 2 Tim 2:25-26 in section 21).
131 TLNT, s.v. “μετάνοια.”
132 The καί here (συνῆθεν καί εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν) is epexegetical. See BDF §442.9. ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας also occurs in 2 Tim 3:7; Titus 1:1.
or acknowledgement. Thus, arriving at “a knowledge of truth” is making a decision to embrace the gospel. The opponents may claim to possess γνώσις (1 Tim 6:20), but Paul declares that they have not the true comprehension of Christ that is associated with genuine conversion. Therefore, Timothy is to minister with meekness, all the time hoping that God will grant the opportunity for the opponents to repent and believe.

If God gifts repentance to the false teachers, they will also experience release: they will come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil (ἀνανήφωσιν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου παγίδος). As it is used here, the verb ἀνανήφω assumes a state of spiritual intoxication that keeps one incarcerated. The opponents need to be brought to sobriety so they can perceive the truth of the apostolic gospel and break free “from the trap of the devil” (ἐκ τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου παγίδος). The genitive is subjective, as evidenced by the accompanying participial phrase (ἐξωγρημένοι ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ἐκείνου θέλημα); the devil set the snare, captured the opponents, and now uses them for his own ends. Paul has already pictured the false teachers as demonic middlemen, human minions who have accepted and now pass on the lies of Satan (1 Tim 4:1-5). Here he expresses that it is Timothy’s duty to instruct the incarcerated underlings, and it is God’s prerogative to liberate them.

D. Summary of the Pericope
Second Timothy 2:14-26 may be understood as an unfolding of 1 Tim 4:16: “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.” Timothy, a “servant of the Lord,” is to demonstrate his allegiance to Christ by the way he lives and teaches within the household. The delegate is not to be disputatious (v. 16, v. 22a, v. 23), though it is expected that he will exercise educative influence, while leaving the desired educational outcome to God (vv. 25b-26). He must be a proficient teacher, one who guides the gospel directly (v. 15)

133 BDAG, s.v. “ἐπίγνωσις.”
135 BDAG, s.v. “ἀνανήφω”: “come to one’s senses and escape.” ἀνανήφω is linked with μετανοέω in Ignatius, Smyrn. 9.1 and in Philo, Leg. 2.60.
and repeatedly (v. 14) to the people, instructing with a disarming gentleness, and waiting patiently for the teaching to transform the hearers (vv. 24-25).

In contrast to Timothy are the opponents, who, though they claim to be “godly” (1 Tim 6:5), actually exemplify “ungodliness” (v. 16). Their destructive teaching is eating its way into the body of believers (v. 14, v. 17). One diseased strand of doctrine is the opponents’ teaching concerning resurrection (v. 18). It seems that they perverted the Pauline teaching of present participation in Christ’s death and resurrection. Their affirmation of the doctrine of participation locates the opponents firmly within the Christian movement. But the opponents distorted Paul’s teaching; they immaterialized ἀνάστασις and asserted that it had been fully realized, which means they likely thought themselves to be current citizens of the age to come. I have noted that this eschatological misconception seems to account for most (if not all) elements of the opponents’ teaching uncovered in the letters thus far.

Despite the fact that false teachers inhabit the community, Paul argues that Christ, having purchased a people for his own possession, knows personally the blood-bought remnant. This remnant must depart from the wickedness of the opponents (v. 19). In fact, even those who currently compose the opponents’ group can separate themselves from the false teaching (vv. 20-21), embrace the apostolic gospel (v. 25), and escape the captivity of the devil (v. 26), thereby demonstrating that actually they are part of the true church that is certain to stand firm (v. 19). Bassler rightly says that this passage suggests a radical understanding of Christian ministry: “One endures the presence of opponents within the church. One even endures the painful experience of their apparent success. One does not engage in hostile debates with them, but corrects them gently… Even the bellicose opponent may prove, by repentance, to be one of God’s own.”

II. Incessant Evil and the Eventual Triumph of Truth (2 Tim 3:1-9)

The second person singular verbs, which were common in the previous pericope, are less frequent in 3:1-9. The unit is introduced by a second singular imperative (v. 1), but another does not occur until v. 5. The verbs of the section are predominantly third person plural. Opponents, whether eschatological (vv. 1-7) or historical (vv. 8-9), are the subjects of seven of the ten finite verbs in the unit, and every participle within 3:1-9 is

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137 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 157.
138 This section includes a number of minor textual issues. For a succinct discussion of these, see Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 770.
used of either the opponents or their captives.139 Whereas 2:14-26 is composed primarily of instructions for Timothy, 3:1-9 is a description of the false teachers and their “ministry.”140 The section functions as both indictment141 and encouragement. Paul reassures his delegate that, though evil is incessant, it will always be exposed.

A. The Opponents Are Among the Evil People Who Characterize the Eschatological Era (vv. 1-5)

The first subsection (vv. 1-5) includes two commands for Timothy and a lengthy vice list. The passage opens with a disclosure formula: “And know this” (Τοῦτο δὲ γινώσκε). The delegate is to be aware of the fact that his ministry is situated in the eschatological era, the days of great difficulty (ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις ἐνστήσονται καιροὶ χαλεποὶ).142 The phrase “last days” (ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις) is synonymous with the phrase “later times” (ὑστέροις καιροῖς), which occurred in 1 Tim 4:1. In view is the interval between the advents of Christ. This final epoch of history is characterized by both salvation (2 Tim 1:9-10; Titus 2:11-12) and spiritual warfare.143 It was common doctrine that the last days would be characterized by an unprecedented outbreak of evil. The idea is prevalent in Jewish apocalyptic literature (e.g., Dan 12:1; 4 Ezra 5:1-13; 2 Bar 25-27) and in the writings of the NT (e.g., Mark 13:3-23; 2 Thess 2:3; 2 Pet 3:3; Jude 17-19). Second Timothy 3:1 is a general warning about this unprecedented outbreak, and the warning is cast in the future tense (ἐνστήσονται). But the imperative ἀποτρέποντα (v. 5b) necessarily makes the end-time evil a present problem.144 Paul numbers the current culprits in Ephesus among the eschatological enemies of God and his people.145

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139 Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 174–175.
140 Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 115, write: “This is the section of the letter actually dealing with heretics. Its introduction shows such a great affinity with 1 Tim 4:1ff. that one must regard both pericopes as variants of the same theme.”
141 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 268.
142 With Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 246.
143 See the discussion of 1 Tim 4:1 in chapter two.
144 In light of what is said in the remainder of the pericope, the sense of v. 1 is: “And know this, that it will be as it now is.”
145 Similarly, Towner, “The Present Age in the Eschatology of the Pastoral Epistles,” 433; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 269; Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 283; Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 771; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 403; Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 176; Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 189. Compare Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 119–122, who warns against assuming the author thought he was living in the last days. Fiore, The Pastoral
To ensure the delegate comprehends the perils of his ministerial arena, Paul employs a vice list. Verses 2-5a may be translated: “For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemous, disobeyed to parents, ungrateful, unholy, lacking in affections for others, irreconcilable, slanderous, lacking in self-control, untamed, lacking interest in the good, treacherous, reckless, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (vv. 2-5a). After Rom 1:29-31, this is the longest vice list in the NT. Unlike the vice list of 1 Tim 1:9-10, the catalogue here has no clear theological design to it. The list is bracketed by double occurrences of words built on the root φιλ-. It also shows some attention to alliterative arrangement, as demonstrated below.

φιλαυτοι
φιλάργυροι

ἀλαζόνες

Epistles, 165, writes: “The letter’s equation of the contemporary false teaching and evil deeds with the end-time tells against its being authentically Paul’s.” This is a misguided claim. What is said here and in 1 Tim 4:1 is not too far from what is said in, for example, 1 Cor 7:26, where Paul speaks of “the impending crisis” (τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην) and then instructs the Corinthians with respect to how they are to live presently. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 312-320, finds in τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην a reference to “the hardship of the last days” (315, emphasis added). Hays, First Corinthians, 126-129, translates τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην “the present necessity,” claiming the phrase refers to “the urgent imperative of proclaiming the gospel and doing the work of the Lord in the short time that remains” (129, emphasis added).

With Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 189; Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 244, who says that the cumulative effect of the list is a description of the last days as days when moral evil will abound in virtually every form. It will not be necessary for me to discuss each item of the vice list. A number of the commentators do this. See especially Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 772–775; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 404–406; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 554–559. Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 3:2-4, says that the first item, φιλαυτος, can be regarded as the source from which all the other vices spring. See also Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 269-270. Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 250, suggests that, by reserving φιλάθλος until the end of the list, the author implies that all forms of vice are inconsistent with the love of God.

The points of contact between Rom 1:29-31 and 2 Tim 3:2-4 lead Hanson, The Pastoral Epistles, 144, and Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 123, to suggest that the latter is based on the former, perhaps with some adaptation due to the author’s knowledge of Philo.

McEleney, “The Vice-Lists of the Pastoral Epistles,” 211–215, discusses the form of the list in detail. Most scholars agree that there is no discernible organizing principle. See, for example, Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 269; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 716.
The final participial phrase stands outside the inclusio, and many scholars suggest
that it is with this phrase that the author transitions from fairly traditional material to
specific information about the opponents in Ephesus. Karris claims, “It can be safely said
that no information about the moral lives of the opponents can be gleaned from the
catalogue of vices found in 3:2-4.”

Sumney says the vice list cannot be used to identify
the opponents.

Dibelius and Conzelmann write: “[The list] is not meant to accuse the
opponents of having committed any or all of the particular sins mentioned. Only v 5
seems an exception.” However, based on evidence uncovered elsewhere in the letters,
it seems that the vice list of 3:2-4 has been tailored somewhat to fit the actual situation in
Ephesus.

Annette Bourland Huizenga rightly notes, “Many of the problematic issues

150 Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral
Epistles,” 560.
151 Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul,
283.
152 Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 115. See also Bassler, 1
Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 159-160, who says: “It is difficult to see how people described
with the terms listed here could be granted to have even the ‘outward form of godliness’
(v. 5)… the vices mentioned here leave no room for even a semblance of this piety. It is
likely, then, that with this charge the author has begun thinking of his concrete
opponents.”
153 Similarly, McEleney, “The Vice-Lists of the Pastoral Epistles,” 211, 215;
Houlden, The Pastoral Epistles, 125; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 269; Knight, The
Pastoral Epistles, 429; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 544. Quinn and Wacker, The First and
Second Letters to Timothy, 716, combat the claim of Dibelius and Conzelmann (cited
taken up by the Pastorals in other places are present in the list: handling wealth, household relationships, proper speech, the communal good, control of the emotions.”\textsuperscript{154} While the vice list of 3:2-4 does not add new details to our description of the opponents, it does pinpoint some issues about which Paul is especially concerned. His reiteration of matters such as an avaricious disposition (φιλάργυρος; compare 1 Tim 6:5, 6-10) and a pretentious/argumentative posture (e.g., ἀλαζών, ὑπερήφανος, ἄσπονδος, τυφῶ; compare 1 Tim 6:4-5; 2 Tim 2:14, 23-24) reveals that these are pressing problems in the community.

Before leaving the catalogue of vices, it will be necessary to offer a close analysis of the concluding phrase, for in this conclusion the opponents surely stand center stage. In v. 5a it is said that some have a form of godliness, though they deny its power (ἔχοντες μόρφωσιν εὐσέβειας τὴν δὲ δύναμιν αὐτῆς ἠρνημένοι). As I have noted before, εὐσέβεια, an important term in the PD (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1), refers to the ongoing translation of right belief into God-pleasing behavior; the word is shorthand for Christian existence.\textsuperscript{155} In my analysis of 1 Tim 6:3, I determined that the opponents have rejected the Christ-centered teaching; therefore, true εὐσέβεια is for them inconceivable. According to 1 Tim 6:5, however, the opponents have conjured their own notion of godliness. For them, εὐσέβεια is a “means of gain,” which, as I argued in chapter two, probably means that the opponents were passing themselves off as “godly” in order to dupe others into paying for their teaching. Their extreme practices and endless discussions of religious trivia gave them a deceptive semblance of true faith, which enabled them to secure a following.\textsuperscript{156} It is this “obvious religiousness” that Paul has in mind when he indicates in 2 Tim 3:5a that the opponents have the “form” (μόρφωσις)\textsuperscript{157} of εὐσέβεια.

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\textsuperscript{154} Huizenga, \textit{Moral Education for Women in the Pastoral and Pythagorean Letters}, 304.

\textsuperscript{155} See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:3 in chapter two.

\textsuperscript{156} Fee, \textit{1 and 2 Timothy, Titus}, 270.

\textsuperscript{157} BDAG, s.v. “μόρφωσις”; Behm, \textit{TDNT}, s.v. “μόρφωσις”: “What is meant is the external form of the Christian life with no inner power, the mere appearance or mask of pious conduct without the corresponding reality which derives from inner piety.”
The opponents travel the streets of Ephesus “wearing a mask of godliness” while “denying its power” (τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῆς ἰρνημένοι). The noun δύναμις is very common in the Pauline letters, though it occurs only three times in the PD (2 Tim 1:7, 8; 3:5). The term is found first in 2 Tim 1:7, where it is said, “God did not give (δίδωμι) us a Spirit (πνεῦμα) of cowardice, but of power (δύναμις) and of love and of self-control.” The meaning of πνεῦμα in v. 7 is disputed, but, as Trebilco contends, “The context of v. 6 is decisive: Timothy has been given ‘τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ’ through the laying on of hands. The image of rekindling and so of fire, often used with the Spirit, the use of χάρισμα and πνεῦμα in close proximity, and the use of δίδωμι, which is often used of God giving the Spirit, strongly argue that πνεῦμα in v. 7 is a reference to the Holy Spirit.” Paul’s point in 2 Tim 1:7, then, is that the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to believers, does not make them timid; rather, the Spirit fills them with power, love, and self-control. He is the empowering Spirit. This thought is repeated in 2 Tim 1:8, where δύναμις is used for the second time. Here, Paul commands Timothy: “take part in suffering for the gospel, in accordance with the power of God” (συγκακοπάσθησον τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ κατὰ δύναμιν θεοῦ). Though the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in v. 8, the preceding verses make clear the fact that it is precisely the power from the Holy Spirit that will enable Timothy to share in such suffering. Given the earlier occurrences of δύναμις, it is highly likely that here in 2 Tim 3:5a Paul means that the opponents have “refused” or “renounced” (ἀρνέομαι) the power that comes from the Holy Spirit. Paul has already indicated that the opponents have departed from the apostolic gospel, the “powerful speech”; thus, they are inwardly

158 Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 3:2-4.
159 Trebilco, “The Significance and Relevance of the Spirit in the Pastoral Epistles,” 244. See also Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 785–789.
160 With Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 789.
161 See Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 790; Trebilco, “The Significance and Relevance of the Spirit in the Pastoral Epistles,” 246.
162 BDAG, s.v. “ἀρνέομαι.” Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 560: “The verb of denial underlines the culpability of the ‘decision’ to veer from the apostolic faith toward some other alternative.”
163 With Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 793; McEleney, “The Vice-Lists of the Pastoral Epistles,” 215, who translates, “He has the appearance of piety but disowns its Spirit.”
incapable of pleasing God.\textsuperscript{164} He now expresses that the false teachers do not possess the \textit{empowering Spirit}, the one who renders a person capable of true godliness.\textsuperscript{165}

Fastened to the end of the vice list is the final second singular imperative of the unit, which recalls the opening command (Τοῦτο γίνωσκε, “know this,” v. 1; τούτους ἄποτρέπω, “avoid these,” v. 5b). The verb ἄποτρέπω is a NT hapax. The term is absent from the Apostolic Fathers, rare in the LXX (3 Macc 1:23; 4 Macc 16:12; Sir 20:29) and in Philo (Gig. 33; Ebr. 79), but common in Josephus (twenty occurrences). It means “purposefully to avoid.”\textsuperscript{166} Timothy must turn away from the types of people highlighted in vv. 2-5a. J.N.D. Kelly says the verb is a strong one, “implying that Timothy is to avoid them with horror.”\textsuperscript{167} Marshall suggests that some form of excommunication may be in mind: “They must be kept out of the congregation where they can exercise a bad influence on others.”\textsuperscript{168} In 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul generally urges Timothy and the congregation to avoid the teaching/quarrels of the opponents (1 Tim 4:7; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:14, 16, 23), but not necessarily the opponents themselves, so the clear command to avoid \textit{individuals} (ὑπονται γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι, v. 2) does seem to indicate a disciplinary measure similar to the one described in 1 Tim 1:20. According to 1 Tim 1:20, when a person within the Christian community begins to behave in ways that are in stark contrast with the apostolic gospel, he or she is to be handed over to Satan, which is to be removed from the church and to be returned to the sphere where Satan holds sway (the world). Thus, the person becomes a target of the church’s mission.\textsuperscript{169} If ἄποτρέπω in 2 Tim 3:5b refers to expulsion, we may presume it is expulsion with the hope of repentance, as in 1 Tim 1:20. Therefore, the command here need not be considered antithetical to Paul’s instructions to the delegate in 2 Tim 2:24-26. Repentance is the goal in both cases.

\textsuperscript{164} See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:5-6 in chapter two.

\textsuperscript{165} Literally, the final part of the indictment reads, “but the power of it” (τὴν δὲ δύναμιν ἀντίθετης), with ἀντίθετης clearly referring to ἔσεβελας. Syntactically, I am arguing for an understood reference to the Holy Spirit followed by a genitive of product (the category is discussed by Wallace, \textit{Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics}, 106-107): “the [Spirit’s] power which produces godliness.” Another option is to classify the genitive as objective: “the [Spirit’s] power for/concerning godliness.”

\textsuperscript{166} BDAG, s.v. “ἀποτρέπω.”

\textsuperscript{167} Kelly, \textit{A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles}, 195.


\textsuperscript{169} See the full discussion of 1 Tim 1:20 in chapter two.
But while the end appears to be the same, the means does not. Here, and in 1 Tim 1:20, Paul writes of definitive separation from opponents. In 2 Tim 2:24-26, he writes of gentle correction of opponents. The complexity of the matter is compounded by the roles Satan is said to play in the process. To separate from an opponent is to hand him or her over to Satan (1 Tim 1:20). Conversely, the opponent who requires gentle correction is the one who is entrapped by Satan (2 Tim 2:24-26). There are at least two possible ways of explaining this convoluted scheme.

First, it could be that in 2 Tim 2:24-26 Paul has in mind opponents who have already been put outside the fellowship (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 3:5b). In this case, the disciplinary process reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy would be as follows. 1) A severely erring opponent is excommunicated, that is, he is handed over to Satan. 2) Outside the fellowship, where Satan has jurisdiction over the offender, the opponent is entrapped. 3) The opponent is evangelized, that is, he is instructed meekly with the hope that he will escape the trap of Satan. An appropriately harsh severance (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 3:5b) precedes benevolence (2 Tim 2:24-26). Though this theory accounts for the involvement of Satan in the disciplinary process, it requires a reading of 2 Tim 2:24-26 that goes against the grain of the immediate context. On this view, vv. 24-26 must be directed toward excommunicated opponents, even though vv. 19-21 allude to opponents within the church.

Second, it could be that 1 Tim 1:20 and 2 Tim 3:5b describe a resort that is to be taken only after a meek ministry of correction has failed (2 Tim 2:26-26). If this is the case, the process of church discipline is as follows. 1) Someone within the Christian community is enticed and then entrapped by Satan. 2) This individual, now doing Satan’s bidding, is an opponent of the church’s mission, and he is to be corrected gently. 3) If gentle correction fails, the opponent is excommunicated; he is returned to the world and he becomes a target of the church’s mission. Benevolence (2 Tim 2:24-26) precedes the

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170 This appears to be the view of Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 47: it is those who are excommunicated who are then vulnerable to the snare of the devil.

171 This point further complicates the assumption that the Hymenaeus mentioned in 2 Tim 2:17 is the same man mentioned in 1 Tim 1:20. Though the name is rarely attested, it could be that a different individual is in view in 2 Tim 2:17 (the Hymenaeus known to associate with Philetus, not the Hymenaeus known to associate with Alexander). On the other hand, if the same individual is in view in both texts, it could be that this excommunicated man is mentioned in 2 Tim 2:17, simply because of his notoriety, just before the thought shifts to a larger group of opponents currently operating within the church (vv. 19-21).
appropriately harsh severance (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 3:5b). This view is more sensitive to the immediate context of 2 Tim 2:24-26. Moreover, this solution is consistent with other texts in 1 Timothy that seem to speak of Satan deceiving some within the Christian community. But this view is not without difficulties. How can Satan incarcerate a member of the body of Christ? Additionally, what is the distinction between being entrapped by Satan (within the church) and being excommunicated/handed over to Satan? Paul declares elsewhere that participation in the body of Christ ensures some protection from the evil powers of this age (e.g., Gal 1:4; Col 1:13). But, as Robert Moses insists, it is important to qualify this protection. Moses writes, “The protection is not absolute… The powers are actively operating in the world; and if their devices are not quickly unmasked, they can gain entry into the church. While members of the body of Christ may enjoy some protection from the powers, believers have to be vigilant in this ongoing struggle with the powers, for the powers are continually working to gain entry into the body of Christ.” By his wiles, Satan can win a way into the house of God. Indeed, he has done so in Ephesus. Satan has some sway over certain individuals within the church. Excommunication in 1 and 2 Timothy, then, should probably be understood as the action of giving Satan full access to the ones in whom he already has his claws.

To summarize, gentle correction of opponents and definitive separation from opponents are both part of the disciplinary process prescribed in these letters. The delegate is to “instruct” the opponents with care (παιδεύω, 2 Tim 2:25), and if this initial measure fails, the recalcitrant offender is to be given over to the devil, who too has a stint as an “instructor” (παιδεύω, 1 Tim 1:20).

B. The Opponents Have Infiltrated Homes and Captivated Certain Women (vv. 6-7)

Paul next provides the reason (γάρ) for the command issued in v. 5b. Timothy is to separate from the evil people of the last days because “from these are the ones who are sneaking into the houses and captivating idle women” (Ἐκ τῶν ἑσιν οἱ ἐνδύοντες εἰς τὰς οἰκίας καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες γυναικάρια). Ἐκ τῶν ἑσιν is equivalent to ᾧν ἐστιν (1

172 Additionally, it seems to be congruent with Titus 3:10: “After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions.” 1 Tim 3:6; see the discussion of 1 Tim 5:15 and 1 Tim 6:9-10 in chapter four. 174 Moses, “Physical And/or Spiritual Exclusion? Ecclesial Discipline in 1 Corinthians 5,” 187. 175 Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 255–256, says that the description contained in vv. 6-7 is a sarcastic one, intended to make the opponents repulsive. Sumney, “Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 284–285, claims that, since
Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:17). Again, the current culprits in Ephesus are said to stand among the end-time enemies of God and his people. The infrequent verb ἐνδύνω indicates infiltration (only here in the NT; see Barn. 4.10; Aelian, Various Histories 4.22). BDAG suggests the meaning “to enter into an area through devious means.” Here it is said that the false teachers have entered the houses (τὰς εἰκίας). The article could signify the houses Timothy already knows about, or perhaps the houses well known to all because of their wealthy inhabitants, inhabitants capable of paying for the opponents’ teaching. Though many commentators rather quickly claim that Christian households (as in 1 Tim 5:13) or house churches are in view here, v. 7 makes this interpretation unlikely (discussed below).

Once they have infiltrated these houses, the opponents “captivate” or “gain control of” (αιχμαλώτιζω; see also Rom 7:23; 2 Cor 10:5) the female residents. The noun γυναικάριον, which occurs only here in the NT (see Epictetus, Ench. 7; Marcus Aurelius, To Himself 5.11), refers to women who are “silly, little, or idle,” known for their weakness and vulnerability. The thought here is of a specific group of women that has proven particularly susceptible to the false teachers’ advances. The appeal of the opponents’ teaching for these women is not stated in this text, but based on evidence uncovered elsewhere in the letters (e.g., 1 Tim 2:9-15; 4:3; 2 Tim 2:18), we may say that it is likely their eschatological teaching and its sociological implications that these women find fascinating. As Johnson says, “An acute realized eschatology that combined
a harsh and demanding regimen with celibacy could have an enormous appeal to women whose lives within the household were defined by biology and social bias.\footnote{Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 414.}

In the remainder of v. 6, Paul uses two participial phrases to further describe this specific group of weak women. First, they are “loaded up with sins” (σεσωρευμένα ἁμαρτίαις). Within the parameters of the NT, σωρεύω occurs only here and in Rom 12:20 (a citation of Prov 25:21-22). Literally, the verb refers to the stacking or heaping of certain objects, such as bones (Josephus, Ant. 12.211) or spices (Josephus, B.J. 1.152).\footnote{See BDAG, s.v. “σωρεύω,” for additional references.} The perfect passive form, used here with ἁμαρτία, probably refers to the weight of guilt these women bear constantly. So burdened by former offenses, they are quick to cling to anyone who offers relief.\footnote{With Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 777.} Second, they are “led by various lusts” (ἀγόμενα ἐπιθυμίαις ποικίλαις). In Paul, ἐπιθυμία almost always has negative connotations (“evil desire” or “lust”),\footnote{See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:9 in chapter four.} but it is highly unlikely that the reference here is to some type of sexual involvement between the false teachers and these women.\footnote{Contra Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 272, who thinks this is a legitimate possibility.} Dibelius and Conzelmann rightly note that, if the author had wanted to accuse the opponents of sexual immorality, he probably would have said it much more clearly.\footnote{Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 116.} Additionally, the opponents make much of chastity (1 Tim 2:15; 4:3). The point here is probably a general one: these women with an unsavory history live an unbridled life.

Finally, in v. 7, Paul states that these women are “always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of truth” (πάντοτε μανθάνοντα καὶ μηδέποτε εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἡλθείς ἐλθεῖν δυνάμενα). “Women” are linked with “learning” three out of the seven times that μανθάνω is used in the PD (1 Tim 2:11; 5:13; 2 Tim 3:7). This, Huizenga suggests, is evidence that the author has “some serious concerns about the learning process for women in particular.”\footnote{Huizenga, Moral Education for Women in the Pastoral and Pythagorean Letters, 279.} The expression “knowledge of truth” emphasizes the cognitive dimension of conversion.\footnote{See the above discussion of 2 Tim 2:25.} ἡλθεῖα refers to the apostolic gospel, and ἐπίγνωσις refers to recognition or acknowledgement; thus, “coming to a knowledge of
truth” is making a decision to embrace the apostolic gospel. The opponents themselves have not embraced the gospel (2 Tim 2:25), so it is impossible for them to lead others to the true comprehension of Christ that is associated with genuine conversion (2 Tim 3:7).

Second Timothy 3:7 is consistently downplayed by the commentators. Marshall says the expression “knowledge of truth” is at times a description of conversion, though he asserts: “here it may be meant more broadly.” He provides no argument for this point. Bassler writes, “It has been argued that the women who were victims of the opponents’ guile were not Christians, since they could ‘never arrive at a knowledge of (saving) truth’; but that rests on too narrow and too literal a reading of the text.” But every other time the phrase “knowledge of truth” is employed in the PD, the thought seems to be of conversion. In 1 Tim 2:4, the expression is linked with the verb σφίζω. In 2 Tim 2:25, it is coupled with μετάνοια, the action of turning from unbelief and sin to God. And in Titus 1:1, the phrase is connected with εὐσέβεια, which in these letters refers to authentic Christian existence. Despite the unexplained hesitancy of some interpreters, it is most probable that here we have a unique reference to the false teachers proselytizing pagan women. Titus 3:3 lends weight to this argument, for there Paul describes existence prior to conversion, and his language is reminiscent of 2 Tim 3:6.

Titus 3:3

Ἡμεν γὰρ ποτε καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀνόητοι, ἀπειθεῖς, πλανώμενοι, δουλεύοντες ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ ἡδοναῖς ποικίλαις

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various lusts and pleasures

2 Tim 3:6

Εκ τούτων γὰρ εἰσίν οἱ ἐνδύοντες εἰς τὰς σκίας καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες γυναικεῖα σεσωρεμένα ἁμαρτίαις, ἀγόμενα ἐπιθυμίαις ποικίλαις

For from these are the ones who are sneaking into houses and captivating weak women, who are loaded up with sins, led by various lusts

I conclude that the women of 2 Tim 3:6-7 are not the women of 1 Tim 2:9-15, nor are they the women of 1 Tim 5:11-15. Both of these earlier passages address women

192 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 161.
193 See also ἐπεγνωκόσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν in 1 Tim 4:3.
within the Christian community who have been influenced by the false teachers. The present pericope, however, describes women who have not arrived at “a knowledge of truth,” that is, women who are outside the Christian community. It appears that the opponents have their own “evangelistic ministry” in Ephesus (compare 2 Tim 4:5: ἔργον ποίησον εὐαγγελιστοῦ), and their scope is wide. This casts doubt on the claim that the false teachers are exclusivists who are “critical of evangelizing non-Jews.”

C. The Infiltrators Will Be Detected, As Were the Opponents of Old (vv. 8-9)

Eventually, however, the opponents’ evangelistic endeavors will fail. In vv. 8-9, Paul likens the false teachers in Ephesus to Jannes and Jambres, names given in some non-canonical writings196 to the anonymous magicians who opposed Moses and Aaron (Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18-19; 9:11). It is part of the religious tradition of both Judaism and Christianity to provide names for the anonymous.197 Though the names do not occur elsewhere in the NT or in the LXX, Jannes and Jambres must have been fairly easily recognized in Paul’s time, for he provides no explanation of the Exodus event here in 2 Tim 3:8-9. Paul probably ventures beyond the Exodus narrative in providing the names of Moses’ opponents in order to make a clear connection to the two opponents named in 2 Tim 2:17: “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these (i.e., people like Hymenaeus and Philetus) oppose the truth” (ὅν τρόπον δὲ Ἰάννης καὶ Ἰαμβρῆς ἀντέστησαν Μωϋσεῖ, οὕτως καὶ οὕτοι ἀνθίστανται τῇ ἀληθείᾳ).198

The pivotal question is: Why does Paul compare the false teachers in Ephesus to these two men? Based on the reference to Jannes and Jambres here, and based on the use of γόης in 2 Tim 3:13, Spicq concludes that the opponents were magicians.199 But Karris rightly argues that the evidence is not sufficiently cogent to follow Spicq in identifying

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195 Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 65. More recently, Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 184.
197 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 272.
199 Spicq, Les Épîtres Pastorales, 1:104–110. See also Lightfoot, Biblical Essays, 411-412; Gunther, St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background, 12.
the opponents as sorcerers. It my investigation of the explicit and implicit units, I have found nothing to substantiate the claim that the false teachers dabbled in magic. The intended point of comparison is not Jannes and Jambres’ craft per se. It is significant that, as the Exodus narrative unfolds, the power of the magicians wanes, and the sorcerers themselves slowly fade from view. When first introduced, the magicians are portrayed as powerful men, exercising their secret arts and performing wonders similar to those of Moses and Aaron (Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7). By the appearance of the third plague, however, the magicians can no longer counter Moses; the men even acknowledge the fact that their sorcery does not compare to the power of God (Exod 8:18-19). When mentioned for the final time in the narrative, the sorcerers are pictured as impotent individuals who cannot even protect themselves from divine judgment (Exod 9:11). In light of this, it seems that Paul mentions Jannes and Jambres as a way of stressing the tenacity of opposition and, more importantly, the eventual triumph of truth. The false teachers in Ephesus are viewed as current examples of a recurring pattern of resistance, a pattern with deep roots in Israel’s history, and a pattern that will continue until the return of Christ. But just as the magicians who opposed Moses (ἀντέστησαν Μωϋσει) were gradually exposed as shams, so time will make manifest the Christian pretenders in Ephesus, those who have the appearance of godliness (v. 5b) while actually opposing the gospel (ἀνθίστανται τῇ ἀληθείᾳ).

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200 Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 561. In 2 Tim 3:13, ἕστης probably has the more general sense of “imposter” (see Delling, TDNT, s.v. “γόης”). This translation is more consistent with the data uncovered in the oppositional units of 1 and 2 Timothy (e.g., the opponents are pretending to be godly in order to make a profit) and more sensitive to the subsequent description in terms of deceit (“wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived”).

201 Contra Pietersen, The Polemic of the Pastorals, 131: “It seems to me highly likely that they are specifically referred to, not just as examples of those who oppose the truth, but because of the thaumaturgical activities of the opponents.”

202 Tromp, “Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim 3, 8-9),” 216-220, 225-226, argues that the author refers to a narrative tradition that considered Jannes and Jambres to be apostates, people who stupidly left the Hebrew community and joined Belial in an effort to destroy God’s people from within. The possibly apostate character of the brothers is supported by CD 5.17-19.

203 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 161.

204 Martin, Pauli Testamentum, 21–22, rightly concludes that a clear line cannot be drawn between opposition to Moses and opposition to the truth of Moses.

205 Theodore of Mopsuestia writes: “Be mindful (he says) of what took place long ago with respect to Moses, whom wicked men opposed. And so there is nothing to be
The present opponents are further described as “men corrupted in the mind.” A similar sentiment is expressed in 1 Tim 6:5: “men depraved in the mind and deprived of the truth.” In both texts, the minds of the false teachers are said to be in some way warped (διεφθαρμένων ἀνθρώπων τὸν νοῦν, 1 Tim 6:5; ἀνθρώπων κατεφθαρμένων τὸν νοῦν, 2 Tim 3:8), and in both places this distortion is linked with a negative response to Christian doctrine (εἰ τις ἐπεροδίδασκαλεῖ καὶ μὴ προσέρχεται ὑγιαίνουσιν λόγοις, 1 Tim 6:3; ἀπεστερημένων τῆς ἀληθείας, 1 Tim 6:5; ἀνθρώπων κατεφθαρμένων τῆς ἀληθείας, 2 Tim 3:8). The thought seems to be of the process of cognitive decay that commenced when the opponents rejected the apostolic gospel. As a further matter, Paul says the opponents are “unfit so far as the Christian faith is concerned” (ἀδόκιμοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν). The adjective ἀδόκιμος occurs seven times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: Rom 1:28; 1 Cor 9:27; 2 Cor 13:5, 6, 7; 2 Tim 3:8; Titus 1:16). The prepositional phrase περὶ τὴν πίστιν occurs here for the third time in 1 and 2 Timothy (see 1 Tim 1:19; 6:21). In 2 Tim 2:15, Timothy was told to present himself to God as an “approved” (δόκιμος) man and an unashamed worker, one who faithfully communicates the word of truth. The opponents may have an active and influential ministry in Ephesus, but, because they have rejected the gospel, they are in God’s eyes “worthless” workers.

In closing, Paul declares with great confidence that the days of the opponents’ influence are numbered: “but they will not advance far” (ἀλλ’ οὐ προκόψουσιν ἐπὶ πλεῖον). In 2 Tim 2:16, Paul says the opponents “will advance further in ungodliness” (ἐπὶ πλεῖον γὰρ προκόψουσιν ἀσεβείας; see also the use of προκόπτω in 2 Tim 3:13). In 2 Tim 2:17, he speaks of the spread of their message. The thought here in 2 Tim 3:9 is of the definite demise of the false teachers, which will occur after an undisclosed duration of their ministry. Their downfall, Paul says, will be due to their “folly” (ἄνοια). The theme

astonished about if even now people corrupt in mind oppose the truth… They will not be able to hide themselves for long” (Comm. 2 Tim 3:8-9).

206 The verbs διεφθαρμένω and κατεφθαρμένω are synonymous. See L&N 88.266.

207 BDAG, s.v. “ἀδόκιμος”; TLNT, s.v. “ἀδόκιμος.” See also Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 550: “worthless as far as Christianity is concerned.”

208 The force of ἐπὶ πλεῖον could be, “but they will not advance any further,” though this yields no essential difference in meaning. See Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 197; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 408.

209 BDAG, s.v. “ἄνοια.” The term occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Luke 6:11. It is, however, somewhat common in the LXX (e.g., Ps 21:2; Prov 14:8; 22:15; Eccl 11:10; thirteen total occurrences).
of foolishness surfaced in 1 Timothy (1:7; 6:4). Here, Paul is confident that, just as Jannes and Jambres were exposed as impotent, so the opponents will be exposed as ignorant (ἓν γὰρ ἀνοια αὐτῶν ἔκδηλος ἦσται πάσιν, ως καὶ ἡ ἐκείνων ἐγένετο). Their deceptive arts will eventually fail, and the people in Ephesus will see that the opponents’ message is indeed an empty one.\(^{210}\) Truth will win out.

### D. Summary of the Pericope

Second Timothy 3:1-9 both reiterates points from 1 Timothy and reveals new information about the opponents and the way the Christian community in Ephesus was to handle them. Paul opens the pericope by calling the delegate’s attention to the fact that his ministry is situated in the eschatological era, the days of great difficulty. To ensure the delegate comprehends the perils of the last days, Paul employs a lengthy vice list. The list has been tailored somewhat to fit the situation in Ephesus. Verses 2-4 do not add new details to our description of the false teachers in Ephesus, but they do pinpoint some of the issues about which Paul is especially concerned. His reiteration of matters such as an avaricious disposition and a pretentious, argumentative posture indicates that these are serious obstacles in the community. The most illuminating part of the vice list is v. 5a. Here, Paul says that the opponents’ asceticism and endless discussions of religious matters give them a deceptive semblance of godliness, even though they have renounced the power of the Holy Spirit, the one who renders a person capable of true godliness.

The imperative of v. 5b (ἀποτρέπου) necessarily makes the end-time evil a present problem. Paul numbers the current culprits in Ephesus among the eschatological enemies of God and his people, and he calls Timothy and the Christian community to separate from them. I have argued that v. 5b indicates a disciplinary measure similar to the one described in 1 Tim 1:20. I have attempted to piece together the disciplinary process reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy, giving special attention to the goal of discipline, the manner of discipline, and the function of Satan within the disciplinary process. The process appears to be as follows. 1) Someone within the Christian community is enticed and then entrapped by Satan. 2) This individual, now doing Satan’s bidding, is an opponent of the church’s mission, and he or she is to be corrected gently. 3) If gentle correction fails, the opponent is to be excommunicated; he or she is returned to the world and becomes a target of the church’s mission. Gentle correction (2 Tim 2:24-26) precedes

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\(^{210}\) Calvin says, “The Lord will expose their madness to many who at first were deceived by their enchantments” (Comm. 2 Tim 3:9).
excommunication (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 3:5b), which in these letters should be understood as the action of giving Satan full access to the ones in whom he already has his claws. Each step of the process is remedial. The delegate is to “instruct” the opponents with care (παιδεύω, 2 Tim 2:25), and if this initial measure fails, the recalcitrant offender is to be given over to the devil, who too has a stint as an “instructor” (παιδεύω, 1 Tim 1:20).

In vv. 6-7, Paul provides new details of the opponents’ “evangelistic ministry.” Their “obvious religiousness” has made it easy for them to captivate certain women with unsavory pasts. The appeal of the opponents’ teaching for these women is not here stated, though it is most likely their eschatological teaching and its sociological implications that the women find fascinating. I have suggested that the women of 2 Tim 3:6-7 are not the women of 1 Tim 2:9-15, nor are they the widows of 1 Tim 5:11-15. Both earlier passages address women within the Christian community who have been influenced by the false teachers. Second Timothy 3:6-7, however, describes the opponents’ influence on women who have not arrived at “a knowledge of truth,” that is, women who have not made a decision to embrace the apostolic gospel. This passage provides unique evidence that suggests the opponents have successfully proselytized some pagan women in Ephesus. Thus, the opponents should not be thought of as exclusivists who refuse to evangelize non-Jews.

Though the opponents currently have a widespread ministry, Paul is convinced that their influence will come to an end (vv. 8-9). Just as the magicians who opposed Moses were gradually exposed as impotent, so time will make manifest the ignorance of the opponents. In due course, it will become clear to all that the false teachers have only a powerless message and a mask of godliness.

III. The Time for Preaching (2 Tim 4:1-5)

Paul’s description of the God-breathed (θεόπνευστος) Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16-17) next and naturally leads to an emphasis on the Word-based ministry of the delegate (2 Tim 4:1-5). Second Timothy 4:1-5 contains nine second person singular imperatives (κήρυξον, ἐπιστηθί, ἔλεγξον, ἐπιτίμησον, παρακάλεσον, νήφε, κακοπάθησον, ποιήσον, πληροφόρησον). The passage may be divided into three parts. A solemn adjuration introduces the first section of exhortation (five imperatives, vv. 1-2). This is followed by a recapitulation of the prophecy of the great end-time conflict (vv. 3-4). Again, the reference is to a continuation of the present situation (see 2 Tim 3:1). The prophecy here.

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211 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 797.
functions as rationale. In light of the time that is coming—nay, in light of the fact that it is already here!—Timothy is to fulfill his ministry in Ephesus. The passage concludes with a conglomeration of ministerial duties to which Timothy must attend (four imperatives, v. 5). Mostly, 2 Tim 4:1-5 provides us with information about the ways in which Timothy is to respond to the opponents.

A. Paul Enjoins Timothy to Prioritize Word-Based Activities (vv. 1-2)

The pericope begins with an adjuration: “I solemnly urge you, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus” (Διαμαρτύρομαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). The verb διαμαρτύρομαι is repeated from 2 Tim 2; Timothy, who is to give a solemn declaration to the Christian community (2:14), now receives one himself. The charge occurs verbatim in 1 Tim 5:21 (see also the similar language in 1 Tim 6:13). Spicq has correlated this solemn opening with the legal procedure for selecting successors in the Hellenistic world. The verb within the formula and the appeal to divine witnesses creates a gravity that would not be missed. Though both God and Christ are mentioned, the stress falls on Christ, the one “who will judge both the living and the dead” (τοῦ μελλόντος κρίνειν ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς). ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς is a merism, the use of two opposite statements to signify the whole; the whole of humanity will answer to Christ at his return. This portrait of Christ—the exalted Lord who will return to judge all people—is found in the undisputed Pauline letters (e.g., Rom 2:14; 14:9; 2 Cor 5:10; see also Acts 1:42; 1 Pet 4:5). Lau rightly points out, “The great eschatological reality of Christ’s judgment and his reward to the faithful is most appropriate in the present context, both as a personal encouragement to Timothy and as a theological rebuttal to those who had spiritualized the resurrection.”

The precise function of the coordinated clause, καὶ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ, is somewhat difficult to determine. The best option is to classify the

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212 Further grounding for the imperatives is provided in 4:6-8 (see Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 183–189), though the opponents are not in view there, so I have opted to focus only on the first section, 4:1-5.
213 Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:798.
214 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 595.
215 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 169.
216 With Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 267.
217 Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 238. See also Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 176.
218 Instead of καὶ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν, some witnesses have κατὰ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν (K2 D1 K L P Ψ etc.). The reading of NA28 is the more difficult reading; scribes probably simplified. With Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 580–581.
accusative substantives as accusatives in oaths; thus, the sense is “and by his appearing and his kingdom,” or perhaps “and in view of his appearing and his kingdom.” This is one of many passages in the PD where epiphany language (ἐπιφάνεια; ἐπιφανίω) is employed. The noun ἐπιφάνεια occurs elsewhere in the NT only in 2 Thess 2:8. The verb ἐπιφανίω occurs only two other times in the NT (Luke 1:79; Acts 27:20). In Greco-Roman sources, epiphany language describes “the unexpected, visible intrusion of the gods in human affairs.” Lau has drawn attention to the LXX, and especially to 2 Maccabees, where epiphany language emphasizes divine manifestations by which God helps his covenant people in desperate times (2 Macc 3:24-28; 5:2-4; 12:22; 14:15; 15:27). In the PD, Paul can use epiphany language to refer to the first advent of Christ (2 Tim 1:10), to the results of this first coming (Titus 2:11; 3:4), and, most commonly, to the second advent of Christ (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13). That the reference here in 2 Tim 4:1 is most likely to the second advent is clear from the connection to the participle, τοῦ μέλλοντος, with the infinitive, κρίνειν, which serves as a periphrasis for the future tense. Again, Paul stresses what lies ahead, in contrast to the opponents, who

219 See Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 204–205; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 428.
221 Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 189–225.
223 Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 452. Though Towner, “The Present Age in the Eschatology of the Pastoral Epistles,” 435, argues that ἐπιφάνεια is more than a mere synonym of παρουσία. The parousia of Christ is “given fuller description by the term ἐπιφάνεια; intervention and help are intimated; a historical event is stressed.”
have spiritualized ἀνάστασις and gutted eschatological hope (2 Tim 2:18).\textsuperscript{224} By mentioning both Christ’s epiphany and his kingdom (βασιλεία),\textsuperscript{225} Paul highlights the inseparable unity of the two events; the kingdom will be finally established when Christ appears as judge.\textsuperscript{226} Calvin writes, “His kingdom will be truly established when He has vanquished His enemies and brought to nought every opposing power, and so openly displays His majesty.”\textsuperscript{227} In light of v. 8, the thought here is primarily positive.\textsuperscript{228} Consideration of the coming judgment, and the vindication and reward associated with it, should motivate Timothy to zealous ministry.

In light of eschatological realities, Timothy is solemnly charged to fulfill the duties associated with his post in Ephesus. These duties are outlined in v. 2 and v. 5. The delegate’s ministry is first summed up in a series of five aorist imperatives\textsuperscript{229} with accompanying qualifications: “preach the word, keep at it whether it is timely or untimely, rebuke, warn, exhort, with the utmost patience and every kind of instruction” (κηρύξον τῶν λόγων, ἐπιστηθῇ εὐκαίρως ἀκαίρως, ἔλεγξον, ἐπιτίμησον, παρακάλεσον, ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ διδαχῇ).

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\textsuperscript{224} With Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 220; Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 259, who argues that one of the purposes of the epiphany language is “to undermine the over-realized teaching of the false teachers and to correct any deviant conduct contrary to the gospel.” Similarly, Philip H. Towner, “Christology in the Letters to Timothy and Titus,” in Contours of Christology in the New Testament, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 225: “Epiphany christology reconceptualizes the relation between eschatology and ethics. For by establishing with a single word that the past historical ‘epiphany’ introduces salvation and the future ‘epiphany’ completes it, the present age between these poles—which is a temporal tension that is so important in these letters—comes fully under the influence of ‘epiphany.’”

\textsuperscript{225} βασιλεία occurs only twice in the PD (2 Tim 4:1, 18) and only a dozen other times in the Pauline corpus (undisputed: Rom 14:7; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9, 10; 15:24, 50; Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 2:12; disputed: Eph 5:5; Col 1:13; 4:11; 2 Thess 1:5), in contrast with the abundant usage of the term elsewhere in the NT. Cognates occur in 1 Tim 1:17; 2:2; 6:15. ἐπιφάνεια occurs with βασιλεία in 2 Clem. 12.1: “Let us wait, therefore, hour by hour for the kingdom of God with love and righteousness, since we do not know the day of God’s appearing” (Ἐκδεχόμεθα οὖν καθ’ ὧν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ, ἐπειδὴ οὐκ οἴδαμεν τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ θεοῦ).

\textsuperscript{226} Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 238.

\textsuperscript{227} Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 4:1.

\textsuperscript{228} With Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 799.

\textsuperscript{229} Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 720-721, classifies the aorist imperatives as constative. Thus, the force of the first imperative, for example, is not “begin to preach,” nor is it “continue to preach,” but “prioritize preaching.”
The first imperative, “preach the word,” is the rubric for the commands that follow.\textsuperscript{230} \(\lambda\varepsilon\gamma\omicron\varsigma\) denotes the apostolic gospel.\textsuperscript{231} The verb \(\kappa\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma\sigma\omega\) is a standard term to describe the proclamation of the Christian message.\textsuperscript{232} It occurs in the PD only here and in 1 Tim 3:16 (\(\epsilon\kappa\eta\rho\omicron\chi\omicron\nu\theta\iota\ \epsilon\nu\ \ell\omicron\nu\varepsilon\sigma\iota\nu\)), though it occurs sixteen times in the undisputed Pauline epistles (Rom 2:21; 10:8, 14, 15; 1 Cor 1:23; 9:27; 15:11, 12; 2 Cor 1:19; 4:5; 11:4 [2\(\chi\)]; Gal 2:2; 5:11; Phil 1:15; 1 Thess 2:9) and once more in the disputed letters (Col 1:23). Twice in the PD Paul refers to himself as a \(\kappa\epsilon\theta\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma\), a “preacher” (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). Additionally, in 2 Tim 4:17, he writes, “But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message (\(\tau\omicron\ \kappa\eta\rho\nu\gamma\mu\alpha\)) might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.” Lorenz Oberlinner contends that believers are the intended recipients of the proclamation prescribed here in 2 Tim 4:2. He avers, “Doch dieser Verkündigungsauftrag hat keinerlei missionarische Zielsetzung, sondern ist auf die christliche Gemeinde gerichtet, auf die Festigung ihres Glaubens und damit auf die Abwehr von Irrlehren.”\textsuperscript{233} But since elsewhere in the letters this sort of language is associated with the Pauline mission to the Gentiles (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 4:17), and since later in this pericope Paul will refer to Timothy as an “evangelist” (v. 5), it is probably incorrect to restrict this preaching activity to the strengthening of those who have already come to the knowledge of truth. The likelihood that the opponents were proselytizing certain pagan women (2 Tim 3:6-7) would make it all the more urgent for Timothy to proclaim the apostolic gospel to those outside the faith.\textsuperscript{234} Smith observes that this occurrence of \(\kappa\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma\sigma\omega\) shows that educational activities were ongoing within the community, and that both believers and unbelievers were instructed by them. It also demonstrates, she argues, “that threats to the community, which themselves were educational in nature, were to be positively and defensively counteracted by educational means.”\textsuperscript{235}

\textsuperscript{230} Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 284.

\textsuperscript{231} See the discussion of 2 Tim 2:15 above. With Houlden, The Pastoral Epistles, 132; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 284–285. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 220, argues that the article here is anaphoric, referring back to the anarthrous synonym, \(\gamma\rho\phi\omicron\varsigma\) (2 Tim 3:16). See also Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 572.

\textsuperscript{232} Friedrich, TDNT, s.v. “\(\kappa\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma\sigma\omega\).”

\textsuperscript{233} Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 155.

\textsuperscript{234} Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 177, says that the mode of teaching contrasts with that of the opponents; they worm their way into homes, while Timothy is directed to minister openly.

\textsuperscript{235} Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 171–172.
The second imperative, ἐπίστηθι, is best translated “keep at it,” that is, “keep at the preaching of the word.” The verb ἐφίστημι, which Paul uses only three times (undisputed: 1 Thess 5:3; disputed: 2 Tim 4:2, 6), has a wide semantic range, but the context is decisive; here the idea must be that Timothy is to “fix his mind on/be ready for” the task of preaching. A pair of adverbs modifies the imperative. The terms εὐκαίρως and ἀκαίρως form a merism, similar to the Latin per fas et nefas or the English “in fair weather and foul.” Timothy’s method (σηρόσσω) and his message (λόγος) are to remain constant, irrespective of favorable or unfavorable conditions. The perpetual readiness to preach departs from the caution employed by contemporary moralists, who placed great emphasis on finding the opportune occasion for a speech, the time most favorable from the point of view of those whom they hoped to persuade. The need for truth in Ephesus is so extremely urgent that Timothy is directed to proclaim the word immediately and persistently.

Paul next commands Timothy to “rebuke, warn, and exhort” (ἐλέγξον, ἐπιτίμησον, παρακάλεσον). The verb ἐλέγχω here means “to express strong disapproval of someone’s action.” This is the meaning the term appears to have elsewhere in the PD (1 Tim 5:20; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15). Titus 1:13 is most telling: “Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith” (δι’ ἥν αἰτίαν ἔλεγξε αὐτούς ἀποτέλεσσας, ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει). Timothy’s task involves confronting those whose thinking and

236 With Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 205; Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 284–285; Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 171. Compare Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 800: “be ready”; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 428: “apply yourself to it.”

237 BDAG, s.v. “ἐφίστημι.”

238 Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 269. By the second imperative Paul means, “at no time abandon teaching” (Theodore of Mopsuestia, Comm. 2 Tim 4:2a).

239 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 171.


241 With Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 601. Contra Malherbe, “In Season and Out of Season,” 145, who says it is due to the extremity of the opponents’ condition (“There seems to be no prospect of amelioration”) that Timothy is told to preach without giving consideration to whether it is opportune or inopportune to do so. Malherbe’s conclusion is inconsistent with a number of passages in 1 and 2 Timothy, especially 2 Tim 2:21, 24-26, as demonstrated above.

242 BDAG, s.v. “ἐλέγχω.”
behavior is incompatible with the apostolic gospel. Smith next uses the verb ἐπιτιμάω, a term common in the Synoptic Gospels but found only here in the Pauline corpus. In the Synoptics, the verb is often used of Jesus’ control over demonic powers (e.g., Matt 17:18; Luke 4:35), sickness (Luke 4:39), and creation (Matt 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24). Smith rightly draws attention to the fact that, when ἐπιτιμάω is employed, the emphasis often falls on the cessation of some proscribed activity. The idea intended here in 2 Tim 4:2 seems to be that Timothy is to “warn” errorists with the hope of preventing future errors. The final verb, παρακαλέω, occurs frequently in Paul (see 1 Tim 1:3; 6:2b). The verb encompasses the type of positive teaching that seeks to move believers toward maturity in the faith.

Verse 2 concludes with the prepositional phrase, ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ διδαχῇ, which should be taken with the whole series of imperatives; Timothy’s entire ministry is to be characterized by “the utmost patience and every kind of instruction.” The adjective πᾶς probably should be distributed to both nouns. μακροθυμία (“patience”) is a quality exhibited by Christ himself (1 Tim 1:16) and exercised by Paul (2 Tim 3:10). The noun διδαχή (undisputed: Rom 6:17; 16:17; 1 Cor 14:6; 14:26; disputed: 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:9) can refer to the activity of teaching or to the content that is taught. It is difficult to determine which is meant here, but since the final three imperatives in the sequence have indicated different teaching activities, it seems likely that the prepositional phrase shifts the focus to composure and then to content. This would also follow naturally from what is said in 2 Tim 3:16 (πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὧφελιμος). Timothy is to make use of the full extent of scriptural and apostolic instruction at his disposal.

243 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 333.
244 Ibid., 338.
245 BDAG, s.v. “ἐπιτιμάω”: “warn in order to prevent an action or bring one to an end.”
246 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 602.
247 With Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 771; Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 284. Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 801, says the phrase is linked with the last imperative, but it may be intended to go with all five.
248 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 602.
249 BDAG, s.v. “διδαχή.”
250 With Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 454; Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 284.
To sum up, v. 2 appears to provide a logical procedure. The first verb is the rubric for Timothy’s ministry: his is a *preaching* ministry. The second verb, with accompanying adverbs, indicates the *constancy* of Timothy’s ministry of proclamation. The following verbs denote corrective activities that are part and parcel of the delegate’s preaching ministry. He is to *confront* those individuals whose lives and teaching are incongruent with the apostolic gospel. Having confronted them, he is to *warn* them that their errors are not to be repeated. Finally, he is to *encourage* his listeners to walk the right path, which is elsewhere in these letters referred to as the path of “godliness.” As he communicates in various ways the full extent of accepted doctrine, Timothy must maintain an attitude of composure and forbearance.

### B. Paul Warns of a Time When People Will Arrange an Alternative Pedagogy and Replace the Truth (vv. 3-4)

The need for a robust teaching ministry is now developed in terms of the allergic reaction some people will have to the apostolic gospel. “Proclamation of the truth is all the more necessary when it is being rejected.”

Though presented as a prediction (‘Εσται γὰρ καιρὸς), vv. 3-4 describe the current crisis in Ephesus (note the γὰρ). Paul here references a *continuation of the present situation*. This is now the third time in 1 and 2 Timothy that Paul has turned to a realized future to ground his directives. It is especially clear from both 1 Tim 4:1 and 2 Tim 3:1 that Paul is concerned to locate the opponents in the panorama of the great end-time conflict. The opponents in Ephesus stand in a long line of eschatological enemies, a line that will lead up to the time of Christ’s appearance and his kingdom (2 Tim 4:1), when he will vanquish all foes. This insistence is perhaps Paul’s ironic jab. The very opponents who have immaterialized the resurrection are in these letters enclosed within the epiphany scheme, thereby ensuring their demise (barring the penitent; 2 Tim 2:25-26) when Christ returns to judge the living and the dead.

In this case, Paul underscores those in the community who are enticed by the errorists. The case is similar to that of 2 Cor 11:4, where congregants are said to be submitting readily enough (καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε) to a different gospel. Here it is said that

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253 Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 283.
254 Pointed out by Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 772.
some have no tolerance for the healthy teaching (τῆς ὑγιαινούσης διδασκαλίας οὐκ ἀνέχονται). This is the only occurrence of the verb ἀνέχω ("to regard with tolerance") in the PD, but the term is found elsewhere in Paul’s letters (undisputed: 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 11:1 [2x], 4, 19, 20; disputed: Eph 4:2; Col 3:13; 2 Thess 1:4). The phrase τῆς ὑγιαινούσης διδασκαλίας is repeated from 1 Tim 1:10. In mind is the body of apostolic doctrine, which is free from pathogenic content and positively health producing. The contrast with the following clause suggests that “the healthy teaching” is a metonymy of effect; Paul states the effect (“teaching”) but intends the cause (“teachers”). Johnson quips, “Since healthy teaching is precisely what Paul and Timothy have to offer (1:13), they face continuing rejection, and will require all the patience and long-suffering they can muster.”

The congregants with whom Paul is here perturbed not only abandon the healthy teaching, “but they will collect teachers according to their own desires” (ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὰς ἰδιὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισωρεύσουσιν διδασκάλους). ἐπισωρεύω occurs nowhere else in the NT, nor is the term found in the LXX, in Philo, or in Josephus. It occurs once in the Apostolic Fathers, in Barn. 4.6, where it refers to the piling up of sins, and it has this same sense of accumulation in Epictetus (Disc. 1.10.5). The term is an intensification of the verb σωρεύω, which Paul has just used in the context of the weak women (2 Tim 3:6). The picture here in 2 Tim 4:3 is of people moving from instructor to instructor, stockpiling the ones who suit their fancy, the ones who satisfy their sinful desires. Only here are the opponents referred to as διδάσκαλοι, but, set in contrast to (teachers of) healthy teaching, διδάσκαλος clearly has negative connotations (“false teacher”). The participial phrase κνηθόμενοι τὴν ἀκοὴν further explains the accumulation of teachers;

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255 BDAG, s.v. “ἀνέχω”; Schlier, TDNT, s.v. “ἀνέχω.”
256 See the discussion of 1 Tim 1:10 in chapter three.
257 Fatum, “Christ Domesticated,” 187: “His emphatic use of the term ‘sound’ conveys the assumption that the community of believers, like a bodily organism, needs to be fed something nourishing and wholesome in order to survive, and grow, and remain healthy and strong.”
258 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 429.
259 Ibid., 430. See also the discussion in Lang, TDNT, s.v. “ἐπισωρεύω.”
260 Similarly, Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 270. See the discussion of 1 Tim 6:9 in chapter four.
261 Sumney (“Servants of Satan,” “False Brothers” and Other Opponents of Paul, 287) says the opponents may be in view here, though Karris (“The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” 562) claims it is stock polemic.
these congregants are collectors “because they have itching ears.” The figurative expression signifies an insatiable curiosity, a restlessness to hear new things, and, in this case, unhealthy things.⁶⁶ These people scour the city in search of pedagogues who will propagate doctrine delightful to their ears.

The image of the “ear” (ἀκοή) links v. 3 and v. 4, as Paul now restates his concern: “And they will turn their ears away from the truth, and will stray to myths” (καὶ ἄπο μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας τὴν ἀκοὴν ἀποστρέψουσιν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοὺς μῦθους ἐκτραπήσονται). ἀποστρέφω means “to turn away” or “to reject” (2 Tim 1:15; Titus 1:14).⁶³ Here, with ἀκοή, the idea is of a refusal to listen to the truth. ἀληθεία is the apostolic gospel, or perhaps the larger body of accepted doctrine, as explained above (2 Tim 2:15, 18, 25; 3:7). This is the fourth occurrence of the verb ἐκτρέπω (see 1 Tim 1:6; 5:15; 6:20), and the third occurrence of μῦθος (see 1 Tim 1:4; 4:7). From vv. 3-4 we may conclude that Paul is keenly aware of a certain number of people from within the Christian community who are abandoning the apostolic gospel and being assuaged by the false teachers’ mythology. It is specifically because of this propensity for the replacement of truth that Timothy is to “preach the word” (2 Tim 4:2). Again, “Proclamation of the truth is all the more necessary when it is being rejected.”⁶⁴

C. Paul Calls Timothy to Discharge the Duties of His Ministry (v. 5)

In v. 5, Paul turns abruptly (Σὺ δὲ) from the description of those who replace truth to the subject introduced at the beginning of the unit, Timothy’s ministerial duties. Four imperatives fill out the charge from vv. 1-2. First, Timothy is told to “be sober-minded in all things” (νήφει ἐν πάσιν).⁶⁵ The verb νήφω can be used in the literal sense of avoiding intoxication and in a figurative sense of being free from mental or spiritual drunkenness (e.g., Josephus, Ant. 6.306; 11.42; 2 Clem. 13.1; Ign. Pol. 2.3; Pol. Phil. 7.2).⁶⁶ In NT exhortation, the figurative sense is dominant (1 Thess 5:6, 8; 1 Pet 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). Spicq notes that sobriety is a quality of the skilled speaker: “νήφειν est un terme technique de la rhétorique, un propre de l’orateur maître de lui-même, de ses pensées et de son

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⁶² Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 803; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 429; Kartzow, Gossip and Gender, 197.
⁶³ BDAG, s.v. “ἀποστρέφω.”
⁶⁵ This is the only present imperative contained in vv. 1-5, but the shift from the aorist is probably insignificant. See Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 576.
⁶⁶ BDAG, s.v. “νήφω”; Bauernfeind, TDNT, s.v. “νήφω.” See the additional references in Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 430.
vocabulaire, par opposition à la véhémence et les excès d'une émotion non contrôlée. He adds, “En ce sens, l'accent serait sur la clarté de l'esprit, la sobriété et le contrôle de l'enseignement doctrinal, évitant les fantasies d'une imagination débridée.” The first imperative of v. 5 is a call to clear-sightedness and steady speech in the face of the challenge posed by fickle congregants and competing claims.

Second, the delegate must “endure suffering” (κακοπάθησιν). In this context, κακοπαθέω (“to bear hardship patiently”) refers specifically to braving false teaching. As Paul himself suffers hardship for the gospel (2 Tim 2:8-9), so too must Timothy endure the many evils of the end-time conflict (2 Tim 3:1-5; 4:3-4). He must not be deterred by any difficulty.

Third, Timothy is to “do the work of an evangelist” (ἔργον ἀγγελιστῆς). εὐαγγελιστής is a rare term. According to Spicq, the term was unknown before the Christian era. It occurs twice otherwise in the NT. In Acts 21:8, the designation is used of Philip. In Eph 4:11, εὐαγγελιστής occurs in a series of gifts given by Christ to his church (Kai αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους). Some interpreters argue that the term refers to a particular office, perhaps an assistant second to the apostles, while others insist that a function of the church leader is in view. The debate need not distract us here. Whether this is a reference to a special office or to a function in leadership and preaching, the

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267 Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:802.
268 Ibid.
269 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 170.
270 The longer reading κακοπάθησιν ὡς καλός στρατιώτης Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (A) is assimilation to 2 Tim 2:3. With Elliott, The Greek Text of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, 160.
271 BDAG, s.v. “κακοπαθέω.”
272 With Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 170.
274 TLNT, s.v. “εὐαγγελιστής.” For patristic usage, see Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 782.
275 See, for example, Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 4:5; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 782-783.
276 See, for example, Barrett, The Pastoral Epistles, 117; Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 264; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 158; Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 170; and especially Alastair Campbell, “Do the Work of an Evangelist,” EvQ 64 (1992): 117–129.
imperative indicates that proclaiming the apostolic gospel lies at the heart of Paul’s concern for the community in Ephesus.  

There is no good reason to conclude from this imperative that the proclamation was to be restricted either to believers or to unbelievers, for, as Alastair Campbell astutely remarks, the “evangelist” is defined “not by his audience but by his message.”

Finally, Paul urges his delegate: “fulfill your ministry” (τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον). The verb πληροφορέω (undisputed: Rom 4:21; 14:5; disputed: Col 4:12; 2 Tim 4:5, 17) means “to fill completely/fulfill.” διακονία, a common term in Paul, here signifies all of the activities associated with Timothy’s post in Ephesus, as evidenced by the pronoun σου (“your ministry”). The list of imperatives, which began with the heading “preach the word,” concludes with a call for Timothy to discharge all of his didactic duties.

D. Summary of the Pericope

This passage provides us with a glimpse of how Timothy is to respond to the false teachers. Indubitably, the delegate’s ministry in Ephesus is a preaching ministry. He is to proclaim the apostolic gospel both to those within the Christian community and to those on the outside. The need for truth in Ephesus is so urgent that Timothy is told to display a perpetual readiness to preach. His method (κηρύσσω) and his message (λόγος) are to remain constant, irrespective of favorable or unfavorable conditions. Timothy’s teaching task involves confronting those whose thinking and behavior is incompatible with the apostolic gospel, warning errorists with the goal of preventing future errors, and encouraging listeners to move toward maturity in the faith. The delegate is to utilize the full extent of scriptural and apostolic instruction at his disposal, and he is to maintain an attitude of composure and forbearance (v. 2).


279 BDAG, s.v. “πληροφορέω.”

280 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 431, rightly says that πληροφορέω here refers to the fullness of ministerial performance. Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 272, senses in the term the notion of succession. See also Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 283: “Here we have a kind of changing of the guard, the word of a dying man to his heir apparent.”
Additionally, Timothy is to be characterized by a clear mind and steady speech as he faces the challenge posed by capricious congregants and competing claims (v. 5). Some within the Christian community in Ephesus are arranging an alternative pedagogy. They are stockpiling teachers who propagate doctrine delightful to their ears (v. 3); they are abandoning truth for the opponents’ mythology (v. 4). Precisely because some are opting to replace the truth, the delegate is to brave the false teaching and dedicate himself to evangelistic work, to the task of proclaiming the apostolic gospel to both insiders and outsiders. The fact that the opponents had some success in proselytizing pagan women (2 Tim 3:6-7) makes it all the more likely that Timothy’s preaching ministry was not limited to those within the house of God.

This passage also provides us with new details of Paul’s theological rebuttal of the opponents. In v. 1, eschatological realities (Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ μέλλοντος κρίνειν ζῶντας καὶ νεκροὺς; ἐπιφάνεια; βασιλεία) function as both motivational material for Timothy and as rebuttal of the false teachers, who have spiritualized the resurrection and gutted eschatological hope (2 Tim 2:18). Moreover, the realized future of vv. 3-4, in combination with the language we have already witnessed in 1 Tim 4:1 and 2 Tim 3:1, makes it clear that Paul is especially interested in placing the false teachers in the panorama of the great end-time conflict. The false teachers in Ephesus stand in a long line of eschatological enemies that will lead up to the time of Christ’s epiphany and his kingdom, when all of humanity—including those who say there is no future resurrection!—will answer to Christ Jesus. Paul encloses the opponents within the epiphany scheme, so that, ironically, the decisive blow will be delivered by the very doctrine they deny: the bodily resurrection at the return of Christ.

IV. A Call to Endure Every Difficulty (2:8-13)

Having examined the explicit language of 2 Timothy, we can now identify 2 Tim 2:8-13 as an implicit unit. The important theme of resurrection, which surfaced in the explicit passage, 2:14-26, also surfaces in 2:8-13; therefore, it is highly probable that Paul composed this unit at least in part to controvert the opponents’ over-realized eschatology. Second Timothy 2:8-13 reinforces the preceding exhortation by presenting the model of Paul’s own suffering and by emphasizing eschatological certainties. Aspects of the passage, however, are unclear. These include the significance of the summary of Paul’s
We will need to give special consideration to these matters.

A. Ethical Focus: Timothy Must Emulate Paul, Who Endures Suffering in the Service of His Gospel (vv. 8-10)

1. Paul’s Gospel is One of Both Realization and Anticipation (v. 8)

The passage begins with a call for the didactic activity of recollecting:

“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel” (Μνημόνευσις Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν ἐγγεγερμένον ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ, κατὰ τὸ οὐαγγέλιόν μου). mnemonēw occurs three times in the undisputed Paulines (Gal 2:10; 1 Thess 1:3; 2:9) and four times in the disputed letters (Eph 2:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 2:5; 2 Tim 2:8). Here the idea is that Timothy is to be continually shaped by what he has already come to know—the gospel. The prepositional phrase κατὰ τὸ οὐαγγέλιόν μου is found in both Rom 2:16 and Rom 16:25. Here, combined with the emphasis on resurrection (discussed below), the authentication is probably a polemical response to competing claims (2 Tim 2:18).

The summary of Paul’s gospel contains the same two elements found in Rom 1:3-4, though here they appear in an unnatural sequence: resurrection from the dead (ἐγγεγερμένον ἐκ νεκρῶν), then Davidic descent (ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ). The effect of the inversion is that the stress falls on the notion of resurrection. This “extraordinary reversal in the order of the two main items in the description of the Christ-event” is most likely a preemptive strike against the opponents’ resurrection doctrine, which

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281 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 141.
282 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 359; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 373: “The point for paraenesis is not a momentary recall, but a persistent and formative recollection.”
283 With Towner, “Christology in the Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 240.
284 For a discussion of similarities and differences, see Karoline Läger, Die Christologie der Pastoralbriefe, Hamburger Theologische Studien 12 (Münster: Lit, 1996), 73; Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 130–131; Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 136-137. Despite the arguments of some scholars (e.g., Oberlinner, “Die ‘Epiphaneia’ des Heilswillens Gottes in Christus Jesus,” 208; Peter Trummer, Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe, BBET 8 [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978], 202-204; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 76), the differences between the texts are too substantial for us to deduce an immediate dependence of 2 Timothy on Romans. Probably, both 2 Tim 2:8 and Rom 1:3-4 stem from a tradition that was pre-Pauline.
285 With Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 142; Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 149.
286 Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 130.
emerges ten verses later.\textsuperscript{287} Collins writes, “In raising Jesus from the dead, God effected the firstfruits of resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is a harbinger of the resurrection of those who belong to him and thus the ground of the believer’s hope.”\textsuperscript{288} The order of affirmations in v. 8 is part of Paul’s theological argument against the false teachers; he intentionally inverts the order of events, refocusing the community’s thinking about resurrection around the \textit{past} resurrection of Christ (v. 8), which in his mind is distinguishable but not separable from the believer’s \textit{future} resurrection (v. 11).

While the significance of the second affirmation, “of the seed of David” (ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ) is not immediately clear,\textsuperscript{289} it becomes evident here that Paul is not wholly opposed to \textit{genealogy}; it is myths and genealogies that distract believers from God’s plan of salvation in Jesus Christ that Paul finds harmful (1 Tim 1:4). Some commentators have taken the two affirmations concerning Christ here in 2 Tim 2:8 as references to his heavenly and earthly aspects,\textsuperscript{290} but, as Marshall points out, the view that the second description refers solely to Jesus’ humanity breaks down on the mention of \textit{David}.\textsuperscript{291} It could be that Paul intends to underscore the fact that his gospel—the true gospel—is one of both \textit{realization} and \textit{anticipation}, and that the former fortifies the latter. The second portion of the gospel summary refers to Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Messiah would come from the lineage of David (2 Sam 7). By alluding to Jesus Christ both as the fulfillment of God’s promise and his people’s expectations and as the first fruits of the dead, Paul invigorates eschatological hope in the face of false

\textsuperscript{287} See Fee, \textit{1 and 2 Timothy, Titus}, 246; Towner, \textit{The Goal of Our Instruction}, 102; Oberlinner, \textit{Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge}, 77; Wieland, \textit{The Significance of Salvation}, 139–140. Marshall, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 735, says that a reference to the \textit{past} resurrection of Jesus is hardly a way of answering the false teachers, but the eschatological thrust of vv. 11-13 suggests that Paul is here thinking of the risen Christ \textit{as the first fruits of the dead} (1 Cor 15:20).

\textsuperscript{288} Collins, \textit{1 and 2 Timothy and Titus}, 223.

\textsuperscript{289} Bassler, \textit{1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus}, 142, says it is a fixed part of tradition, cited as such, and does not contribute to the argument. Collins, \textit{1 and 2 Timothy and Titus}, 223, says that since the author does not otherwise exploit the messianic character of Jesus, he is simply echoing the traditional faith of the church.

\textsuperscript{290} See, for example, Dibelius and Conzelmann, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 108; Houlden, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 118; Oberlinner, \textit{Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge}, 76. Theodore of Mopsuestia, \textit{Comm.} 2 Tim 2:8, says this verse combats docetic views of Christ. For him, this is a perfectly natural pairing: “For how could belief in a true resurrection have come about if flesh had not been assumed by true account?” Calvin, \textit{Comm.} 2 Tim 2:8, as well says the second description “undoubtedly asserts that He was true man, born of our humanity as the Son of Mary.”

\textsuperscript{291} Marshall, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 735.
teachers who say the resurrection has already taken place. The God who made good his promise to David, who raised Christ from the dead, will indeed resurrect believers to participate in Christ’s eternal reign (2 Tim 2:12a).

2. Paul Suffers to the Point of Incarceration, But the Gospel Advances Freely (v. 9)

Having articulated his gospel, Paul now explains the afflictions he endures in gospel ministry. The relative pronoun refers back to εὐαγγέλιον (v. 8), and the preposition ἐν is either a marker of cause (“because of this”) or sphere (“in this sphere of action”). κακοπαθέω (see 2 Tim 4:5 above) is one of many terms used in the letter for the suffering that is associated with the apostolic gospel (see also συγκακοπαθέω in 1:8; 2:3; πάσχω in 1:12; πάθημα in 3:11). Here, μέχρι specifies the extent of Paul’s suffering; he suffers “to the point of chains, as a criminal” (μέχρι δεσμῶν ὡς κακοῦργος).

Paul commonly uses the noun δεσμός (“bond” or “fetter”) in reference to his imprisonment for Christ/the gospel (undisputed: Phil 1:7, 13, 14, 17; Phlm 10, 13; disputed: Col 4:18; 2 Tim 2:9), though he uses κακοῦργος only here. The term may indicate the more serious state of affairs as he writes this particular letter. It is also possible that Paul employs the term as a way of showing that he shares the fate of the one whose name he bears; κακοῦργος occurs three additional times in the NT, only in Luke’s Gospel, and only in reference to the “criminals” crucified at The Skull (Luke 23:32, 33, 39).

Unlike its instruments, the gospel cannot be incarcerated. Paul suffers to the point of chains, “but the word of God has not been chained” (ἀλλ᾿ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ σύν δέσμαι). The phrase ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ is synonymous with τὸ εὐαγγέλιον μου (v. 8). A similar personification of the gospel is found in 2 Thess 3:1: “Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly.” The series of

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293 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 513.
295 BDAG, s.v. “μέχρι.”
296 BDAG, s.v. “δεσμός.”
297 See Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 503; Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 143.
298 Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 224.
299 BDAG, s.v. “δέω,” literally “to bind” or “to tie.”
300 With Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 108.

Here in 2 Tim 2:9, Paul shares this confidence that, even when those entrusted with the gospel suffer setbacks, the word itself does not. “Truth breaks through and spreads itself far and wide.” It seems likely that behind v. 9 is the idea, common in Isaiah, that the word of the Lord is a powerful force that will indeed move to its fulfillment (e.g., Isa 1:20; 22:25; 24:3; 25:8; 40:5; 55:11; 58:18). Human opposition cannot thwart God’s saving word.

3. Paul Endures All Things with the Confidence That the Elect Will Obtain Salvation (v. 10)

Because the word remains unchained (διὰ τοῦτο), Paul remains steady in his service (πάντα ὑπομένω διὰ τούς ἐκλεκτούς). The verb ὑπομένω occurs in the PD only in this pericope (see also v. 12; the noun ὑπομονή occurs in 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 3:10; Titus 2:2), though Paul uses the term in both Rom 12:12 and in 1 Cor 13:7 (πάντα ὑπομενεῖ). In the NT, the term often refers to the steadfast endurance of the Christian under the difficulties of the present evil age. “Endurance” implies the expectation of a happy outcome, which, as the immediate context confirms, is the end result of resurrection.

Here, Paul’s steadfastness, which is due to the power and freedom of the word (διὰ τοῦτο), is said to be “for the sake of” a particular group—“the elect” (διὰ τούς ἐκλεκτούς). ἐκλεκτός occurs ninety-seven times in the LXX, and twenty-two times in the NT, but only six times in Paul’s letters (undisputed: Rom 8:33; 16:13; disputed: Col 3:12; 1 Tim 5:21; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 1:1). The reference in 2 Tim 2:10 has been variously understood. 1) Some have taken ἐκλεκτός as a reference to present unbelievers chosen for salvation. On this view, Paul labors so “the elect” will receive the gospel and obtain salvation. But Marshall rightly argues that such an understanding of ἐκλεκτός “curiously

301 Pointed out by Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 146.
302 Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 142.
303 Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 2:9.
304 Collins, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 224; Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 146.
305 διὰ τοῦτο is retrospective, referring to ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ οὗ δέδεται. With Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 145.
306 Hauck, TDNT, s.v. “ὑπομένω.”
307 TLNT, s.v. “ὑπομένω”; Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 504.
308 See, for example, Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, 156; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 399.
excludes those who are already believers. 2) Some have seen here a reference to both unbelievers chosen for salvation and current believers. On this view, Paul endures both for the unbelievers who will receive the gospel and obtain salvation and for the believers who will persevere in the faith. Towner, however, says that this interpretation fails to acknowledge the fact that, in both the OT and in the NT, the term ἐκλεκτός most commonly refers to “those who are at present God’s people.” 3) Some have claimed that ἐκλεκτός refers to present believers, whom Paul helps to persevere to the end.

Whether those who will believe or those who already have believed (or both) are in view is, in my judgment, an inappropriate question to ask. In this section of 2 Timothy (1:3–2:13), Paul is primarily concerned with the delegate’s task. In light of this, the precise identity of “the elect” is inconsequential. The point is surely that God’s saving word will move to its fulfillment, all of God’s true people will obtain salvation, and this certainty makes enduring the difficulties of ministry worthwhile.

Verse 10 concludes with a purpose clause; Paul perseveres for the elect, “in order that they also might obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory” (Ἰνα καὶ αὐτοὶ σωτηρίας τύχωσιν τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἡσοῦ μετὰ δόξης αἰωνίου). Most probably, καὶ αὐτοὶ signifies “the elect” in addition to Paul and Timothy. τυγχάνω has the sense of attaining something that is out of one’s own reach. The preposition in the formula ἐν Χριστῷ Ἡσοῦ could be a marker of location (“the salvation that is found in Christ Jesus”), or a marker of condition (“the salvation that is associated with/conditioned by Christ Jesus”), though in either case the phrase marks out “the specifically Christian

310 See, for example, Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 95; Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:747.
311 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 504n30.
312 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 737. Bassler, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 143, claims that ἐκλεκτός here is not to be associated with the doctrine of predestination. In her view, the hymn of vv. 11-13 presents salvation, not as a secure possession, but as a conditional hope.
313 With Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 148. Similarly, Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 505: “Paul thinks of ‘the elect,’ without splitting fine theological hairs, as ‘God’s people’ for whom he willingly endures whatever afflictions he must.”
314 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 738; Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 150, with references.
315 Harris, Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament, 124.
316 Constantine R. Campbell, Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 93–94.
character of the salvation to be obtained.” That the accent falls on the eschatological nature of salvation is evident from the final prepositional phrase, “with eternal glory” (μετὰ δόξης αἰωνίου). Paul lays down a pattern of perseverance for his delegate, ensuring Timothy that suffering is a necessary component of gospel ministry, while reminding him that “beyond present endurance awaits the eschatological prize.”

B. Theological Basis: Perseverance Leads to Vindication; Apostasy Leads to Disavowal (vv. 11-13)

Eschatological realities permeate the hymnic piece of vv. 11-13, as Paul now undergirds (γάρ, v. 11b) the exhortation contained in the previous section. Verse 11 begins with the faithful saying formula (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος), which occurs five times in the PD (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8). As I noted in my discussion of 1 Tim 4:9, in at least the majority of cases, the faithful saying formula is used to stress soteriological material. This is certainly the case in 2 Tim 2:11; there is almost universal

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\[\text{217}\] Guthrie, The Pastoral Epistles, 156.
\[\text{218}\] Towner, The Goal of Our Instruction, 103.
\[\text{219}\] Paul’s suffering spoken of here has been interpreted in a number of ways. Läger, Die Christologie der Pastoralbriefe, 75–76, argues that for a later author the suffering of Paul has become part of the gospel itself, but this is surely an erroneous claim, as the passage is explicit about the content of the gospel (v. 8). Jeremias, Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus, 54, finds a quota of suffering to be fulfilled by the Christian community, but this ventures beyond the evidence of the text. Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 81–82, rightly highlights the fact that suffering is essential for the spread of the gospel. Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 248, best captures the point: “It is the gospel for which he suffers, not Paul’s suffering for the gospel, that ultimately brings their salvation.”

\[\text{220}\] Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 248.

agreement that here the formula is introductory.  As I argued in the previous chapter, the fact that the opponents are promulgators of some alternative soteriological arrangement, combined with the fact that Paul consistently underscores the untrustworthiness of the opponents, suggests that Paul intends at least some of the faithful sayings to be quick but sharp blows to the opponents. These sayings bolster the community’s confidence in the apostolic gospel and cast doubt on the opponents’ doctrines. Here, it is particularly the opponents’ resurrection doctrine that is countered. The certainty of future resurrection, which was subtle in vv. 8, 10, is now expressed in such a way that it is almost impossible to miss.

The themes contained in vv. 11-13—death, life, enduring, reigning, denial, and (un)faithfulness—are common in Paul’s writings, and the section bears some resemblance to Rom 6 (εἰ δὲ ἀπεθάνωμεν σῶν Χριστῷ, πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήτομεν αὐτῷ, v. 8). The hymn is composed of four lines. Each line is composed of a short conditional clause (εἰ + an indicative verb) and a result clause. The protases move from aorist to present and then from future to present. The apodoses are future until the final one, which is present. The first two lines are dominated by συν- compounds (συναπεθάνωμεν, συζήτομεν, συμβασιλεύσομεν), which require the inclusion of the implied participant. Christ (vv. 8, 10) is the obvious choice. Additionally, in these first two lines, conditional statements are

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322 The consensus is noted by Bassler, *I Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 143; Campbell, “Identifying the Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” 75. And, in this case, soteriological material would be stressed even if the formula were to be taken as a summation, as suggested by Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 96.


324 I suggested in the previous chapter that three of the four faithful sayings in 1 and 2 Timothy probably combat the opponents (1 Tim 2:15-3:1; 4:8-10; 2 Tim 2:11-13). These three sayings occur in oppositional units. The fourth saying in 1 and 2 Timothy, however, does not occur in an oppositional unit (1 Tim 1:15), so we can say only that Paul possibly counters the opponents with this statement.


326 Bassler, “‘He Remains Faithful’ (2 Tim 2:13a),” 173, says, “One of the relatively few places in the Pastoral Epistles where the author of these pseudonymous letters seems to remain faithful not only to Paul’s theology but almost to his very words is in the hymn quoted in 2 Tim 2:11-13.” Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 132, says the section is “more Pauline than the Pastorals.”
followed by promises of reward. In the third line, the result clause promises rejection rather than reward, thus creating the expectation of an aabb pattern, but the hymn concludes with a rather surprising reference to the faithfulness of God.327 We turn now to the contents of the piece.

In the first line of the hymnic piece, Paul declares, “if we died with him, we will also live with him” (εἰ συναπεθάνωμεν, καὶ συζήσομεν). συναποθνήσκω (“to die with”)328 occurs only three times in the NT (Mark 14:31; 2 Cor 7:3; 2 Tim 2:11), but the simplex term ἀποθνῄσκω is very common. Likewise, συζάω (“to live with”)329 is found only three times (Rom 6:8; 2 Cor 7:3; 2 Tim 2:11), though ζάω is used abundantly. Some find here a call to martyrdom.330 It is unlikely, however, that this is the primary point Paul intends to communicate.331 The aorist verb (συναπεθάνωμεν) probably pictures death as a past event, and the sequence of lines one and two (death, life, enduring, reigning) speaks against a reference to literal death here.332 It appears that metaphorical death is in view, as in Rom 6:8, where “death with Christ” refers to incorporation into Christ’s death through conversion/baptism.333 Paul goes on to say that those who are united to Christ, dead to the old self, will live with Christ. The question is whether συζήσομεν refers solely to the eschatological resurrection or to both future and present aspects of salvation. Since the hymn is inserted as theological motivation for Timothy, the eschatological aspect is probably uppermost in mind; future hope fuels the delegate for his present ministry. But this eschatological emphasis need not exclude the idea that the present life of the

327 Bassler, “‘He Remains Faithful’ (2 Tim 2:13a),” 175–176.
328 BDAG, s.v. “συναποθνήσκω”; TLNT, s.v. “συναποθνήσκω.” In secular usage, the term often expresses loyalty in combat contexts; see Spieq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:748.
329 BDAG, s.v. “συζάω.”
330 See the discussion in Jeremias, Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus, 55; Brox, Die Pastoralbriefe, 244; Trummer, Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe, 204–207; Young, The Theology of the Pastoral Letters, 124–126; Läger, Die Christologie der Pastoralbriefe, 73–81.
331 The thought of martyrdom could be implicit in the second line of the hymn (i.e., “enduring” in gospel ministry to the point of death).
332 Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 650, call these definitive arguments against a reference to martyrdom.
Christian is, metaphorically, one of resurrection.\textsuperscript{334} As mentioned above, it is this very notion of the current new life in Christ that the opponents probably misconstrued (see the discussion of 2:18 above). Here, Paul affirms both the present reality of the believer’s participation in the death and resurrection of Christ and the eschatological reality of the bodily resurrection of all those who belong to “Jesus Christ, raised from the dead” (v. 8). Towner says, “Providing this already/not yet tension was perceived, it would have supplied the necessary correction to the wholly realized outlook of the false teachers.”\textsuperscript{335}

The verb ὑπομένω connects line two of the hymn to Paul’s previous comments about perseverance (v. 10). Those who endure (ei ὑπομένομεν) will also reign with Christ (καὶ συμβασιλεύσωμεν). ὑπομένω breaks the pattern of συν- compounds\textsuperscript{336} and is the only present tense verb in the first two lines of the hymn. The present tense is appropriate for the ongoing endurance that is required if one is to participate in the reign of Christ.\textsuperscript{337} The verb συμβασιλεύω (“to reign jointly”)\textsuperscript{338} is found in the NT only here and in 1 Cor 4:8, where it is used ironically.\textsuperscript{339} The future tense here in 2 Tim 2:12 confirms the eschatological emphasis in the promise of life contained in the first line of the hymn. In view is the final resurrection and vindication of believers when Christ returns to consummate his kingdom.\textsuperscript{340} The thought of sharing in Christ’s eschatological role of king and judge is widespread in the NT (e.g., Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Rom 5:17; 1 Cor 6:2-3; Rev 1:6; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5). Lau says of 2 Tim 2:12a: “The already/not yet

\textsuperscript{334} Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 119, says the future tense verb could refer to “the time which flows forth from our death with Christ in immediate life.”

\textsuperscript{335} Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction*, 106.

\textsuperscript{336} Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 740, says the simplex form is used out of necessity; there is no corresponding compound of the verb “to endure.”

\textsuperscript{337} Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 121, says: “Although one must remain under and suffer, the idea is not that of hopeless submission but rather of hopeful perseverance that endures with faithfulness to God with an eye on the future.”

\textsuperscript{338} BDAG, s.v. “συμβασιλεύω.”

\textsuperscript{339} Polycarp uses the term as Paul uses it in 2 Tim 2:12. “If we are pleasing to him in the present age we will receive also the age that is coming, just as he promised that he would raise us from the dead and that, if we conducted ourselves worthy of him, we would also rule together with him (συμβασιλεύω)—so long as we believe” (Pol. Phil. 5.2).

tension is maintained until the final consummation of all things; and this implies that any ‘over-realized’ eschatology is ruled out.”

The promise of eschatological triumph is immediately followed by a thunderous deterrent: “if we deny him, he will also deny us” (ἐἰ ἀρνησόμεθα, κἀκεῖνος ἀρνήσεται ἡμᾶς). This third line of the hymn undoubtedly echoes the saying of Jesus: “Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies (ἀρνέομαι) me before others, I also will deny (ἀρνέομαι) before my Father in heaven” (Matt 10:32-33; see also Luke 12:8-9). The verb ἀρνέομαι occurs seven times in the PD (1 Tim 5:8; 2 Tim 2:12 [2x], 13; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:16; 2:12). Here the term means “to disclaim association with a person.” Though no object is specified, the reference is easily ascertained from the context. Those who reject Christ will in return experience rejection at the end-time judgment. Since Paul has consistently indicted the opponents for repudiating the truth of Christ (see especially 1 Tim 6:3), and since he also refers to them as those who deny (ἀρνέομαι) the power of godliness (2 Tim 3:5), it would be amiss not to find a word of warning for the false teachers here. If they continue to disclaim association with Christ, replacing his truth with their own “knowledge” (1 Tim 6:20), Christ will say to them, “I never knew you” (Matt 7:23).

The fourth line of the hymnic piece is the most difficult to interpret. This final line affirms the principle of divine fidelity: “if we are unfaithful, he remains faithful” (ἐὰν ἀπιστεύμεν, ἐκεῖνος πιστὸς μένει). Like line three, the concluding line provides a human action and the divine response, though the future tense verbs of line three are here replaced by present verbs. The verb ἀπιστέω, fairly uncommon in the NT (Mark 16:11,
16; Luke 24:11, 41; Acts 28:24; Rom 3:3; 2 Tim 2:13; 1 Pet 2:7), can refer to unbelief or unfaithfulness. Since the context is one of paraenesis, combined with the fact that the verb is here set in contrast to Christ, the one who perpetually is πιστός, it is more likely that the latter sense is intended. The thought, then, is of human unfaithfulness, which is met with divine faithfulness. The difficulty lies in determining how this thought meshes with the message of the previous line.

Some interpreters argue that the final line reinforces the warning of the previous line by emphasizing divine faithfulness with respect to judgment. Christ will act in accordance with his warning, judging all who have rejected him. However, as Knight demonstrates, the weakness of this view is that the NT usually speaks of divine faithfulness in order to buttress the confidence of God’s people rather than to warn. The better interpretation is that the final line balances the warning of line three with a promise of faithfulness to the elect; Christ is faithful to “those who are his” (2 Tim 2:19). Bassler rightly insists on reading the hymnic piece not only as theological warrant for what precedes it, but also as a bridge to the polemical passage that follows. The point here parallels the encouragement contained in 2:19-21. Despite apostasy (ἀρνηται) and “lapses in loyalty” (ἀπιστεύω) within the community, Christ remains faithful to his true people, because he cannot be untrue to his own nature and purpose of

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347 BDAG, s.v. “ἀπιστεύω.”
348 ἐκεῖνος clearly refers to Christ (vv. 8, 10).
349 The adjective occurs seventeen times in the PD: 1 Tim 1:12, 15; 3:1, 11; 4:3, 9, 10, 12; 5:16; 6:2 (2x); 2 Tim 2:2, 11, 13; Titus 1:6, 9; 3:8.
350 See, for example, Lock, The Pastoral Epistles, 96; Oberlinner, Die Pastoralbriefe. Zweite Folge, 88.
351 Knight, The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters, 128–130; see also Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 157–158.
352 With Bassler, “‘He Remains Faithful’ (2 Tim 2:13a),” 181. Many commentators emphasize divine faithfulness to the covenant. See, for example, Jeremias, Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus, 55; Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:750; Dibelius and Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles, 109; Houlden, The Pastoral Epistles, 119; Quinn and Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 653.
353 Bassler, “‘He Remains Faithful’ (2 Tim 2:13a),” 179.
354 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 513. Similarly, Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, 180; Spicq, Les Épitres Pastorales, 2:750; Wieland, The Significance of Salvation, 157-158; Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 517-518, who says that line four speaks of a present-day unfaithfulness that stops short of apostasy or final denial. The separate terms (ἀρνηται, ἀπιστεύω), tenses (future, present), and responses (κἀκεῖνος ἀρνήσεται ἡμᾶς, ἐκεῖνος πιστός μενει) suggest that a distinction should be made between denial (line three) and unfaithfulness (line four).
salvation (ἀρνήσασθαι γὰρ ἐαυτὸν οὐ δύναται). The character of Christ ensures the preservation of the church—all of God’s true people will obtain eschatological salvation (as in v. 10). It is this truth that will encourage Timothy to endure the presence of false teachers and any other difficulty associated with his ministry in Ephesus. Whatever befalls the Ephesian community, “God’s firm foundation stands” (2 Tim 2:19).

C. Summary and Reflection

In the first part of 2 Tim 2:8-13, Paul establishes a pattern of perseverance for his delegate. Timothy is to be continually shaped by what he has already come to know, the message of “Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David” (v. 8). After expressing essential features of his gospel, Paul explains the afflictions he endures in gospel ministry. Though he suffers to the point of chains, he says emphatically, “the word of God has not been chained” (v. 9). The gospel is pictured as a powerful force that will surely move to its fulfillment. Human opposition cannot thwart God’s saving word. Because of this, Paul remains steady in his service. He endures the hard work of ministry with the confidence that all of God’s people will obtain “the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory” (v. 10).

Theological material follows, undergirding the call for endurance. The faithful saying assures those who have been incorporated into Christ’s death through conversion/baptism that they have not only been (metaphorically) resurrected now, but they will also experience (bodily) resurrection in the future (v. 11). The hymn also assures those who endure that they will be vindicated; when Christ returns to consummate his kingdom, those who have persevered will participate in his eternal reign (v. 12a). However, those who disclaim association with Christ will experience rejection at the end-time judgment (v. 12b). Balancing this warning, the final line of the hymnic piece emphasizes Christ’s faithfulness to the elect. The character of Christ confirms the preservation of his true yet imperfect people (v. 13). Timothy can face the troubles of Ephesus with the knowledge that the one who “came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim 1:15) is perpetually πιστός, guaranteeing that all of God’s people will obtain eschatological salvation.

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355 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 742. It seems likely that γάρ (inclusion: Ἐλλιότ, The Greek Text of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, 43), but the presence or absence of the conjunction makes little difference; the final clause is explanatory in either case. See Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 377.
Herein, Paul invigorates eschatological hope in the face of false teachers who say the resurrection has already taken place (2 Tim 2:18). Both the pattern of Paul’s ministry (vv. 8-10) and the faithful saying (vv. 11-13) are intended, at least in part, to herald an assurance of the apostolic gospel and to cast doubt on the opponents’ teaching. Eschatological certainties surface throughout the unit.

In v. 8, Paul distinguishes his gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον μου) from the soteriological arrangement of the opponents. The true gospel is one of both realization and anticipation. The summary of the apostolic gospel contains elements from Rom 1:3-4, but by inverting the order—bodily resurrection then Davidic descent—Paul refocuses the community’s thinking about resurrection around the past resurrection of Christ (v. 8), which in his mind is distinguishable but not separable from the future resurrection of believers (v. 11). The God who fulfilled his promise to David, who raised Christ from the dead (v. 8), will certainly resurrect persevering believers to participate in Christ’s eternal reign (v. 12a). Though apostasy within the community is a very real possibility (v. 12b), the effectual word (v. 9) and the principle of divine faithfulness (v. 13) ensure that the salvation already accomplished by Christ (v. 8) will be fully attained by all of God’s true people (v. 10). Against the opponents, Paul here affirms both the present reality of the believer’s participation in the death and resurrection of Christ and the eschatological reality of the bodily resurrection of all those who belong to Christ (v. 11). Thus, Timothy is encouraged: beyond endurance awaits the eschatological reward. Moreover, the opponents are at once retorted and warned. Their message is explicitly contrary to the message of “Jesus Christ, raised from the dead” (v. 8), and if they continue to disclaim association with Christ, replacing his truth with their own γνῶσις (1 Tim 6:20), Christ will say to them, “I never knew you” (Matt 7:23; v. 12b).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the three explicit units of 2 Timothy (2:14-26; 3:1-9; 4:1-5) and the one unit of the letter that contains implicit language (2:8-13). The examination has been fruitful: previous observations have been clarified and new components have emerged. We now have a more complete picture of the opponents’ teaching and practices, as well as a better understanding of the way Paul combats the false teachers theologically and the way he expects Timothy and the wider community to engage them. The exegetical analysis of 1 and 2 Timothy is complete, and I will now seek to piece together the full gamut of data collected in chapters two to five.
6

Theological-Ethical Collision in Ephesus

Introduction

Our “interested” investigation of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy has progressed through two of three stages. I have provided, first, an exegetical analysis of the explicit discourse units, those units where we have certain reference to the opponents (1 Tim 1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-5; 6:2b-5, 20-21a; 2 Tim 2:14-26; 3:1-9; 4:1-5). I have turned, second, to the implicit discourse units, those sections of the letters where we have highly probable reference to the opponents (1 Tim 1:8-11; 2:9-15; 4:6-10; 5:9-16; 6:6-10; 2 Tim 2:8-13). Having identified and analyzed all oppositional units of the letters, I will now offer some overall conclusions about the opponents, focusing on the questions “What doctrines and practices set the opponents apart from the faithful Christian community?” and “How does/should the Christian community respond to them?” As I argued in the opening chapter, the first question is designed to clarify the one church’s confession, as well as what her confession requires her to denounce, and the second question is designed to clarify the one church’s mission, especially as it relates to those who are hostile toward the apostolic gospel.

“Theological-ethical collision” captures the essence of this chapter, which will be composed of two main sections, each with multiple subsections. In the first main section of the chapter, I will offer a disciplined description of the opponents (answering the “What?” question). Relying on the evidence unearthed in the oppositional units, I will consider what we can conclude about the opponents’ origin, condition, doctrine/practices, and operation/“ministry.” For those scholars who are not yet convinced by the method I have proposed, opting still to search for historically plausible contemporary people and movements with whom the opponents of 1 and 2 Timothy might be linked, I will attempt to shorten the docket by highlighting a number of theories that in my view can safely be dismissed as implausible. In lieu of an ambiguous designation (e.g., “Gnostic,” “proto-Gnostic,” “Jewish Christian”), I will conclude the first main section of the chapter with a composite sketch of the opponents.
In the second part of the chapter, I will provide a detailed account of the communal reaction to the opponents (answering the “How?” question). Again utilizing the evidence of the explicit and implicit units, I will consider the strategy for dealing with the hostility in the house of God. I will give attention both to the tactics of the author (i.e., how Paul combats the opponents in the letters themselves) and the procedure the author formulates for the delegate and the wider community.

I. Disciplined Description of the Opponents

A. What Can We Conclude About the Opponents’ Origin?

The evidence uncovered in the oppositional units indicates that the opponents came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus; they once were considered to be in good standing within the community, they now have in Paul’s view revealed their true nature as spiritual outsiders, though probably they continued to identify themselves as insiders (i.e., as “Christians” or as “believers”).

1. Spiritual Outsiders Treated as Insiders

In the pilot passage (1 Tim 1:3-7), Timothy is told to give orders to the opponents (v. 3); thus, it is clear that they are under community jurisdiction.¹ They are treated as insiders in that they are expected to submit to apostolic authority. In the same passage, however, Paul indicates that the opponents have not experienced genuine conversion. For Paul, ἀγάπη flows from the one with “a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith,” but the opponents have “missed” (ἀστοχέω) these (vv. 5-6). In Paul’s assessment, the false teachers are incapable of producing ἀγάπη, the outer life that is pleasing to God. Thus, they are spiritual outsiders (vv. 5-6) who are nonetheless treated as insiders (v. 3).

I have dealt with this predicament by arguing that the opponents were previously perceived as being in good standing within the Pauline community in Ephesus, though now, by their rejection of the apostolic gospel and promulgation of an alternative soteriological arrangement (vv. 3-4), they have in Paul’s view shown their true colors. Paul presently sees the opponents as people who have not made a genuine faith-commitment, but because formerly they were viewed as insiders, and likely because they continue to think of themselves as “Christians” or as “believers,” Paul expects the opponents to answer to Timothy.² Those now deemed to be spiritual outsiders desire a

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¹ See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section one.

² In 1 Tim 4:2, we perhaps find a further suggestion that the opponents continued to identify themselves as insiders. Here, Paul combines the terms ὑπόκρισις and
teaching position so they can offer their own readings of the law (v. 7). The opponents, then, are placing themselves under Timothy’s jurisdiction.

2. Named and Excommunicated Individuals

We find further support for the claim that the opponents have come from within the Pauline community as we consider the ways in which Paul refers to the opponents in the letters. Paul most commonly uses the indefinite pronoun to refer to the opponents (1 Tim 1:3, 6, 19; 4:1; 5:15; 6:3, 10, 21; 2 Tim 2:21). In a city as large as Ephesus, it is unlikely that Paul knew every false teacher personally, so the indefinite pronoun is a natural way of referring to his opponents. Probably, there is a pejorative sense to the expression; by using the indefinite pronoun, Paul indicates that “they” are not with “us.”

This is confirmed by the clearly negative designations Paul uses elsewhere, such as “hypocritical liars” (1 Tim 4:2), “the opponents” (2 Tim 2:25), and “these men who oppose the truth” (2 Tim 3:8). Most telling, however, are the instances where Paul replaces the customary indefinite pronoun with proper nouns. He does know some of the opponents personally. In the explicit units, Paul mentions three names: Hymenaeus (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17), Alexander (1 Tim 1:20), and Philetus (2 Tim 2:17). While we cannot know what precisely it was that made these men worthy of special mention, the fact that Paul knows them by name indicates that these are men with whom he is acquainted, most likely because they have come from within the Pauline community in Ephesus. The fact that the Hymenaeus and Alexander of 1 Tim 1:20 have been excommunicated by Paul indicates that at least these men, men from among the larger group of shipwrecked opponents, were once considered to be in good standing within the community. If 1 Tim 1:20 functions as a concrete model for the delegate, as I have suggested, then there are other opponents within the Pauline community whom Timothy is to discipline in similar fashion.

3. Imposters within the Church

ψευδόλογος (“hypocritical liars”) to stress the point that the opponents are not who they say they are. The point could be: “They pretend to be one of us.” See the full discussion in chapter two, section three.

3 Paul also refers to the opponents as “the ones desiring to be rich” (1 Tim 6:9) and as “teachers” (didaskalo, 2 Tim 4:3), but, since it is set in contrast to (teachers of) healthy teaching, didaskalo has negative connotations here (“false teachers”).

4 See the full discussion and notes in chapters two and five.
Additional evidence is contained in 2 Tim 2:19-21, an oppositional subsection that admits to the coexistence of faithful individuals and imposters in the church. The sayings on the church imply that some who claim to be part of the community of Christ do not actually belong to him (v. 19). The ecclesial quagmire is made explicit in the “great house” passage that follows (vv. 20-21): just as the master has some instruments for honorable use within his house, so Christ has some individuals for honorable use within his church. This subsection is immediately preceded by a very specific doctrinal error of the opponents (v. 18) and immediately followed by words to Timothy concerning how he is to instruct the opponents (vv. 22-26); therefore, vv. 19-21 should be understood as a reflection of the reality in Ephesus. There are some within the church who have not “named the name of the Lord” (v. 19).

4. Assessment of the Errant Elder Theory

The most probable conclusion with respect to the origin of the opponents is that they came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus. Fee, however, who draws attention to the prophecy recorded by Luke in Acts 20:17-35, ventures beyond the evidence of 1 and 2 Timothy when he claims that the opponents were errant elders. While we have reasons to think that the prophecy of Acts 20 at some point became a reality in Ephesus, there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that the prophecy was fulfilled at the time of the writing of 1 and 2 Timothy. Similarly, Oropeza draws attention to the fact that Korah, to whom Paul alludes in 2 Tim 2:19, was a prominent Levite. From this point, he concludes that the opponents were probably once leaders within the Christian community in Ephesus. But as Bauckham has demonstrated, there was a well-established tradition that employed OT characters such as Korah as negative examples, highlighting the incompatibility of God’s true people and evil. In light of this tradition, the connection between Korah and the opponents in Ephesus may not be as specific as Oropeza claims. While it is possible that the opponents were once elders in Ephesus, the evidence I have uncovered does not allow me to suggest this as a probable conclusion.

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5 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
6 Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 39-40. Similarly, Pietersen, Polemic of the Pastorals, 139; Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 207, 265.
7 See the discussion in Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 189–195.
9 Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 77-84.
B. What Can We Conclude About the Opponents’ Condition?

It is clear from the evidence of the explicit and implicit units that the opponents had rejected the apostolic gospel, and, in Paul’s assessment, this rejection marked the beginning of a process of degeneration; thus, at the time of the writing of 1 and 2 Timothy Paul viewed the former insiders as evil people, enemies of God and the faithful Christian community.

1. Initial Rejection of the Apostolic Teaching

Paul’s dominant critique is that the opponents have rejected the apostolic teaching, which in the polemical portions of the letters is referred to most often as “the truth” (1 Tim 4:3; 6:5; 2 Tim 2:15 [“the word of truth”], 18, 25; 3:7, 8; 4:4), commonly as “the faith” (1 Tim 1:19; 4:1, 6 [“the words of the faith and the good teaching”]; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim 2:18[?]; 3:8), and sporadically as “the healthy teaching” (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3 [“the healthy words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness”]; 2 Tim 4:3).10 Below, I will rehearse the most informative occurrences of these terms. We will also need to consider the important phrase “knowledge of truth,” which occurs in three oppositional units (1 Tim 4:3 [“those who believe and have come to know the truth”]; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7), as this phrase provides further substantiation for the claim that the opponents have not responded positively to the apostolic gospel. Finally, Paul uses certain terms of the opponents’ teaching that do not reveal a great deal about what the opponents were claiming, but that nonetheless clarify that they were not affirming the apostolic gospel. These include the verb ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω (1 Tim 1:3; 6:3), the noun μῦθος (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim 4:4), the compound forms ματαιολογία (1 Tim 1:6) and κενοφωνία (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 2:16), the phrase πνεύματι πλάνοις καὶ διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων (1 Tim 4:1), and the warning contained in 2 Tim 2:17: ὁ λόγος αὐτῶν ὃς γάγγραινα νομὴν ἔξει. a. “The Truth”

10 Less frequent in the oppositional units are the terms εὐαγγέλιον (1 Tim 1:11; 2 Tim 2:8 [“my gospel”]), λόγος (2 Tim 2:9; 4:2), and παραθήκη (1 Tim 6:20). “The truth,” “the faith,” and “the healthy teaching” are roughly equivalent; each necessarily includes the apostolic gospel. The gospel is clearly connected to “the healthy teaching” in 1 Tim 1:10-11. Additionally, in 1 Tim 4:6 “the faith” is further described as “the good teaching,” which is another way of referring to “the healthy teaching”; therefore, “the faith” and “the healthy teaching” are synonymous. Also, 1 Tim 2:4 demonstrates that “the truth” either refers to or necessarily includes the gospel (“[God] desires for all people to be saved, that is, to come to a knowledge of truth”).
In these letters, the term ἀλήθεια refers to the apostolic gospel, or perhaps at times to the larger body of Christian doctrine with the gospel at its core. Four times Paul indicates that the opponents have rejected “the truth.” First, in 1 Tim 6:5 he refers to the false teachers as those who are “deprived of the truth” (ἀπεστερημένων τῆς ἀληθείας). Paul uses the verb ἀποστερέω to indicate that the opponents suffer from a damaging lack of apostolic doctrine.\(^\text{11}\) Second, in 2 Tim 2:18, it is said that both Hymenaeus and Philetus have “missed the mark with respect to the truth” (περὶ τὴν ἀληθείαν ἠστόχησαν). The aorist form of the verb ἀστοχέω is used to signify that deviation from the accepted Christian doctrine has already taken place.\(^\text{12}\) Third, in 2 Tim 3:8 Paul ventures beyond the Exodus narrative in providing the names of Moses’ opponents in order to make a clear connection to the two opponents named in 2 Tim 2:17: “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these (i.e., people like Hymenaeus and Philetus) oppose the truth.”\(^\text{13}\) In the same way that these two magicians actively resisted Moses and his message, the opponents in Ephesus set themselves against (ἀνθίστημι) the apostolic teaching. Fourth, in 2 Tim 4:4 Paul draws attention to a certain number of congregants who are refusing to listen to the truth and are instead straying to the opponents’ myths.\(^\text{14}\) The future tense is employed to describe the present situation in Ephesus as one that will linger. Presently, some within the church are abandoning (ἀποστρέφω) truth for the opponents’ teaching. This statement in 2 Tim 4:4 presupposes the opponents’ rejection of the apostolic gospel.

b. “The Faith”

Five times Paul indicates that the opponents have distanced themselves from “the faith.” He first says that the opponents have “suffered shipwreck so far as the faith is concerned” (περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἐνανάγησαν, 1 Tim 1:19).\(^\text{15}\) The prepositional phrase περὶ τὴν πίστιν occurs two other times in 1 and 2 Timothy (1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 3:8), and both times the content of the Christian faith, rather than personal faith, is in view. It is more likely, then, that Paul speaks in 1 Tim 1:19 of the false teachers suffering disaster with reference to accepted Christian doctrine. Second, according to 1 Tim 6:21, to profess the false teachers’ γνώσις is to “miss the mark with respect to the faith” (περὶ τὴν πίστιν

\(^\text{11}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section four.
\(^\text{12}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
\(^\text{13}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section two.
\(^\text{14}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section three.
\(^\text{15}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section two.
perὶ τὴν πίστιν occurs for the third time in 2 Tim 3:8, where Paul says the opponents are “unfit” or even “worthless so far as the faith is concerned” (ἀδόκιμοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν). Paul has just instructed the delegate to present himself to God as an “approved” (δόκιμος) man and an unashamed worker, one who faithfully communicates the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). The opponents may have an active and influential ministry in Ephesus, but, because they have rejected the apostolic gospel, they are in God’s eyes “worthless” workers.

Additionally, in 1 Tim 4:1 Paul employs the verb ἀφίστημι to indicate that the opponents have “departed” or “moved away from” the faith. Since here “the faith” is set in contrast to “demonic doctrines,” πίστις should again be understood as objective content. Finally, Paul says it was by reaching for riches that the opponents “have been led away from the faith” (ἀπεπλάνησαν ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως, 1 Tim 6:10). Since in v. 9 he implies that the devil lures and ensnares the avaricious, Paul most likely thinks here in v. 10 of Satan leading the opponents away from the faith (discussed further below).

c. “The Healthy Teaching”

On three occasions Paul makes it clear that the false teachers do not agree with “the healthy teaching.” In 1 and 2 Timothy, the body of apostolic teaching is sometimes invested with a quality generally reserved for the human body—healthiness. The point of the personification is twofold: 1) the apostolic doctrine is free from all pathogenic content and thus is positively health producing, and 2) the opponents’ doctrine is contaminated. This is evident in 1 Tim 6:3, where the “the healthy words” are further described as “the teaching that accords with godliness” (τῇ κατ᾽ εὐσέβειαν διδασκαλίᾳ). The healthy teaching brings εὐσέβεια, the ongoing translation of right belief into right behavior. The opponents, however, “do not apply themselves” (μὴ προσέχεται) to the healthy words. Thus, their teaching does not bring true godliness, but rather corrupts the character and produces sinful conduct.

This notion surfaces as well in 1 Tim 1:8-11. Here, Paul asserts that the law is not meant for believers, because believers have been transferred from the realm where the law, sin, and death exercise dominion to the realm of righteousness (v. 9a). Rather, the

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16 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section five.
17 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section two.
18 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section three.
19 See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section three.
20 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section four.
law is for the wicked, which Paul emphasizes by citing a number of despicable individuals (vv. 9b-10). By using the verb ἀντίκειμαι (“to be opposed”) at the conclusion of the vice list, Paul associates the opponents in Ephesus with the individuals he has just enumerated. The false teachers stand among the wicked, those who oppose “the healthy teaching,” which is “in accordance with the gospel” (κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον).

Finally, in 2 Tim 4:3 Paul writes of members of the community who have no tolerance for “the healthy teaching/healthy teachers” (τῆς ὑγιεινούσης διδασκαλίας οὐκ ἀνέξονται), and so they turn to the opponents’ myths (v. 4). Clearly, then, the opponents are not “healthy teachers.”

d. “Knowledge of Truth”

The expression “knowledge of truth” (ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας) is employed in the PD to emphasize the cognitive dimension of conversion. The expression occurs in two oppositional units in 2 Timothy. In 2 Tim 2:25, Timothy is told to instruct the opponents with meekness, all the time hoping that God will grant them the repentance that leads to a knowledge of truth. That ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας is here coupled with μετάνοια, the action of turning from sin and unbelief to God, is evidence that Paul is thinking of the opponents’ need for conversion. Second, in 2 Tim 3:7 Paul says that the opponents have infiltrated certain houses and captivated weak women. These women, Paul declares, are “always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of truth.” The opponents may have γνῶσις (1 Tim 6:20), but since they have not embraced the apostolic gospel (ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας, 2 Tim 2:25), it is impossible for them to lead others to the true comprehension of Christ that is associated with genuine conversion (2 Tim 3:7).

Also, in 1 Tim 4:3 Paul further defines believers (τοῖς πιστοῖς) as “those who have come to know the truth” (ἐπεγνωκόσι τὴν ἀληθείαν). Those with a knowledge of truth, Paul says, ought to partake of God’s gracious provision of sustenance with grateful hearts. While in this text he does not explicitly say the opponents have failed to come to a
knowledge of truth, Paul does imply that, by forbidding certain foods, they are not behaving like believers.

e. “Deviant Doctrine”

At the outset of the first letter, Paul refers to the opponents as those who teach deviant doctrine (1 Tim 1:3). The verb ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω presupposes the existence of a stable, recognized body of content that constituted authentic apostolic doctrine. The verb is repeated in 1 Tim 6:3, where it is also said that the opponents do not apply themselves to “the healthy words of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For Paul, Christ is the source and center of the apostolic doctrine, and the grave error of the opponents is their abandonment of this Christ-centered teaching. Indeed, the verb προσέρχομαι in 1 Tim 6:3 indicates that the opponents are not the least bit interested in the gospel. Their thoughts have wandered instead to legendary lore (1 Tim 1:4).

f. “Myths”

The opponents, Paul says, are preoccupied with “myths and endless genealogies” (1 Tim 1:4). While the terms μῦθος and γενεαλογία are cryptic, we can conclude that Paul uses the former term to erect a strong boundary between the opponents and the faithful Christian community in Ephesus. μῦθος occurs three times in 1 and 2 Timothy (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim 4:4). In 1 Tim 1:4, Paul states that the opponents’ “myths” are associated with “speculation” (ἐκζήτησις) that is at odds with “the redemptive arrangement of God that is by faith” (οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει). The term οἰκονομία here refers to the arrangement by which God brings redemption through Christ. The emphatic point, then, is that the revelation of God’s salvific plan is the antithesis of the speculation associated with the myths of the opponents. The terms ἐκζήτησις and οἰκονομία function in 1 Tim 1:4 in the same basic way that ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω and the presupposed accepted doctrine function in 1 Tim 1:3; both pairs highlight the primary reason the opponents are dangerous: they have replaced the apostolic gospel with some alternative soteriological arrangement. Second Timothy 4:4 is also telling, for there “myths” (τοὺς μῦθους) clearly are set in contrast to “the truth” (τῆς ἀληθείας), the body of Christian doctrine with the gospel at its core.

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26 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 75.
27 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section four.
28 See the full discussion and notes in chapters two (1 Tim 1:4) and five (2 Tim 4:4). I will discuss 1 Tim 4:7 below; see the subsection “The Law as Sourcebook for Those with Eschatological Eyes.”
g. “Empty Speech” and “Empty Sounds”

I have argued that the term ματαιολογία, which occurs in 1 Tim 1:6, is best translated as “empty speech.” In 1 Tim 1:5-6a, Paul indicates that the opponents are incapable of producing ἀγάπη because they have rejected the apostolic gospel (vv. 3-4). The gospel, then, is implicitly the “powerful speech,” for it is the message that renders a person capable of producing ἀγάπη, the outer life that is acceptable to God. In contrast, the opponents have turned to “empty speech,” speech that is impotent to transform the person, powerless to produce the godly life.

The term κενοφωνία (“empty sounds”) is synonymous with the term ματαιολογία. κενοφωνία occurs in the NT only in 1 Tim 6:20 and 2 Tim 2:16. In both passages, Paul stresses gospel proclamation, and then immediately calls for Timothy to avoid τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας. Implicit is the notion that the apostolic gospel is the “powerful sound,” the message that, when heard and believed, brings transformation. In contrast, the opponents utter only “empty sounds.” By combining βεβήλος and κενοφωνία, Paul indicates that the opponents’ message is powerless precisely because it is godless.

h. “Seductive Spirits and Demonic Doctrines”

In what is perhaps the strongest statement in the letters, Paul expresses that the opponents have departed from the faith “by being devoted to seductive spirits and demonic doctrines” (1 Tim 4:1). That Paul goes on to enumerate specific practices of the opponents (v. 3a) and then to refute their food asceticism (vv. 3b-5) indicates that the prophecy of v. 1 has already been realized in Ephesus. Paul first uses the plural form of the noun πνεῦμα with the qualifier πλάνος to distinguish the “seductive spirits” from the Holy Spirit, who is the trustworthy author of the prophecy (v. 1). The message the opponents promulgate originates in the evil spiritual realm. Thus, Paul says, secondly, their words are to be classified as “demonic doctrines.” The plural form of διδασκαλία is used to create an intentional contrast with the singularity and authority of the apostolic gospel. Though some interpreters classify 1 Tim 4:1 as rhetorical flourish, the numerous references in these letters to the principal evil being (σατανᾶς, 1 Tim 1:20; 5:14-15; διάβολος, 1 Tim 3:6-7; 2 Tim 2:26) suggests that Paul understands Satan and his demonic

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29 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section one.
30 See the discussion and notes in chapters two and five.
31 This is consistent with the emphasis on “hearing” in 1 and 2 Timothy. See 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 1:13; 2:2, 14; 4:17.
32 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section three.
powers to lie at the root of the problem in Ephesus. In Paul’s assessment, the opponents are human minions who have accepted and now mediate the lies of Satan.\textsuperscript{33} Thus, the battle between the delegate and the deviant teachers is ultimately a spiritual struggle.

i. “A Deadly Disease”

In 2 Tim 2:16-17a, Paul expresses that, as the opponents themselves advance further in “ungodliness” (ἀσέβεια), their doctrine will spread, severely damaging the community of faith.\textsuperscript{34} Having just referred to the apostolic gospel as “the word of truth” (v. 15), Paul here refers to the opponents’ message as “their word,” thus underscoring the fact that theirs is a message void of ἀλήθεια. This message, according to Paul, “will spread like a deadly disease.” The image in 2 Tim 2:17a is both unmistakable and unforgettable. In contrast to the life-giving gospel (1 Tim 1:15-16, 4:8; 2 Tim 1:1, 10), the opponents are promulgating death-dealing doctrine, and this doctrine is eating its way into the body of believers.

2. Subsequent Degeneration of Character

For Paul, the opponents’ decision to reject the apostolic gospel and promulgate an alternative soteriological arrangement marked a “changing of sides.” He now views the former insiders as mentally and morally corrupt. This will become evident as we rehearse Paul’s remarks about the opponents’ “consciences” (1 Tim 1:5, 19; 4:2) and their “minds” (1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:8), and as we look to the three vice lists that occur in oppositional units (1 Tim 1:9-10; 6:4-5; 2 Tim 3:2-5). Spiritually, the opponents are now aligned with the principal adversary—Satan (1 Tim 4:1-2; 6:9-10; 2 Tim 2:26). Thus, they are now considered to be evil individuals who pose a serious threat to the community of faith.

a. “Conscience”

A unique contribution of the PD is the clear correlation between the response to the apostolic gospel and the condition of the human conscience (συνείδησις). In these letters, the conscience is best understood as the internal instrument that translates belief into behavior. The very placement of συνείδησις in 1 Tim 1:5, sandwiched between ἀγάπη (faith’s outworking in the Christian life) and πίστις (the posture of belief in Christ) is suggestive.\textsuperscript{35} For Paul, the conscience is intended to translate the apostolic gospel into ἀγάπη-living—this is its proper function. Thus, he can speak of believers as having a

\textsuperscript{33} Compare 2 Cor 11:3, 13-15; 1 John 3:10.
\textsuperscript{34} See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
\textsuperscript{35} See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section one.
“good conscience”; it is “good” because it is working properly, that is, their positive response to the gospel has made godliness for them a reality. On the contrary, the opponents have “missed the mark” of a good conscience (1 Tim 1:5-6), and they have “rejected” or “dismissed” the good conscience (1 Tim 1:19). In essence, their consciences are “not good.” Their negative response to the gospel means that their consciences do not work properly; their corrupt doctrine simply cannot be translated into conduct that is pleasing to God. Furthermore, Paul says in 1 Tim 4:2 that the opponents’ consciences are ineffective (“seared”); therefore, they are viewed as belonging to Satan (“branded”). They have “missed the mark” of a good conscience (1 Tim 1:5 -6), and they have “rejected” or “dismissed” the good conscience (1 Tim 1:19). In essence, their consciences are “not good.” Their negative response to the gospel means that their consciences do not work properly; their corrupt doctrine simply cannot be translated into conduct that is pleasing to God. Furthermore, Paul says in 1 Tim 4:2 that the opponents’ consciences are ineffective (“seared”); therefore, they are viewed as belonging to Satan (“branded”).

b. “Mind”

The term νοῦς occurs once in 1 Timothy and once in 2 Timothy, both times in reference to the opponents, and both times the thought seems to be of a process of cognitive decay that commenced when the opponents made the decision to reject the apostolic gospel. In 1 Tim 6:5, the opponents are described as “men depraved in mind” (διεφθαρμένων ἀνθρώπων τῶν νοῶν). This distortion is linked closely with a negative response to the apostolic gospel; in the same pericope it is said that the opponents teach deviant doctrine and that they do not agree with the healthy words of Christ (v. 3). Paul goes on in v. 5 to say that the opponents are bereft of the truth (ἀπεστερημένων τῆς ἀληθείας). The two perfect participles (διεφθαρμένων, ἀπεστερημένων) are used to indicate that these conditions—mental corruption and spiritual deprivation—exist now because of the past action of turning away from the gospel. Similarly, in 2 Tim 3:8 the opponents are described as “men corrupted in the mind” (ἀνθρωποὶ κατεφθαρμένοι τῶν νοῶν). Here again opposition to the truth and corruption of the mind are closely associated (οὗτοι καὶ οὗτοι ἀνθίστανται τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, ἀνθρωποὶ κατεφθαρμένοι τῶν νοῶν).

c. Wickedness, Divisiveness, and a Mask of Godliness (The Vice Lists)

Vice lists occur in three oppositional units (1 Tim 1:9-10; 6:4-5; 2 Tim 3:2-5). The form of the list in 1 Tim 1:9-10 is at least partially determined by the Decalogue. With the exception of their “profane” (βέβηλος) message, there is no evidence elsewhere in the letters that the false teachers were committing the precise crimes mentioned in this vice
But Paul does seek to locate the opponents in the company of the depraved (ἀντίκειμαι, v. 10). The second vice list is found in 1 Tim 6:4-5. Since the vices in this list are consistent with the comments about the opponents found elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 1:7, 1:20; 4:1-2; 2 Tim 2:14, 23; 3:8; 4:3-4), the catalog in vv. 4-5 probably should be understood as a reflection of the reality in Ephesus. The opponents are first characterized as pretentious and disputatious individuals, those who tear down rival teachers. Their thoughts have wandered away from “the healthy words” (v. 3), and, as a result, they have engaged in heated and unhelpful word-wars (ζήτησις, λογομαχία). Similar language is used in both 2 Tim 2:14 and 2 Tim 2:23. In the former text, Paul warns Timothy that the opponents’ word-wars are not just unhelpful, but disastrous: they bring eschatological ruin to those who hear. Their arguments, then, must have to do with the meaning and significance of words at the core of the Christian faith. The opponents’ message and their means are uninformed by God’s truth; for this reason, Paul states in 2 Tim 2:23 that their debates are foolish ones that bring no instruction.

Finally in the vice list of 1 Tim 6:4-5, Paul accuses the opponents of “supposing godliness to be a means of gain.” Though true εὐσεβεία is for the opponents inconceivable, because they have rejected “the teaching that accords with godliness” (v. 3), they have conjured their own notion of εὐσεβεία: it is a “means of gain” (πορισμός). While a commonplace charge against opponents in the ancient world was that they were only interested in teaching to turn a profit, I have argued that the charge in 1 Tim 6:5 has a basis in fact. The opponents in Ephesus were passing themselves off as “godly” in order to dupe others into paying for their teaching. Piety was for them a profit-making operation (discussed further below).

The final vice list is found in 2 Tim 3:2-5. Unlike the list of 1 Tim 1:9-10, this catalogue has no clear theological design to it. Additionally, unlike the list of 1 Tim 6:4-5, the catalogue here has been tailored only somewhat to fit the actual situation in Ephesus. Against a number of scholars who claim that no information about the false

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40 See βεβηλος in 1 Tim 4:7; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:16; discussed above under the subsection “Myths.”
41 I have discussed this point above; see the subsection “The Healthy Teaching.”
42 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section four.
43 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
44 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section four.
45 Fiore, The Pastoral Epistles, 118.
languages for the analysis of textual content.

teachers can be gleaned from 2 Tim 3:2-4, I have argued that, while the list does not add new details to our description of the opponents, it does pinpoint some issues about which Paul is especially concerned.\textsuperscript{46} Paul’s reiteration of matters such as an avaricious disposition (φιλάργυρος; compare 1 Tim 6:5, 6-10) and a pretentious and argumentative posture (e.g., ἁλαζών, ὑπερήφανος, ἀσπονδός, τυφῶ; compare 1 Tim 6:4-5; 2 Tim 2:14, 23-24) reveals that these are pressing problems in the community.

Particularly informative is the final part of the vice list in 2 Tim 3:2-5. In v. 5, Paul accuses the false teachers of “having a form of godliness but denying its power.” Their extreme practices and specious arguments gave them a deceptive semblance of true faith, thus enabling them to secure a following (1 Tim 6:5). It is this “obvious religiousness” that Paul has in mind when he indicates that the opponents have the “form” (μόρφωσις) of εὐσέβεια. The false teachers parade the streets of Ephesus “wearing a mask of godliness”\textsuperscript{47} while “denying its power.” Based on the other occurrences of the noun in 2 Timothy (1:7, 8), I have suggested that δύναμις here refers to the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{48} Previously, Paul indicated that the opponents have departed from the apostolic gospel, which implicitly is the “powerful speech” (1 Tim 1:6); thus, they are incapable of pleasing God. He now expresses that the false teachers do not possess (ἀρνέομαι) the empowering Spirit, the one who renders a person capable of true εὐσέβεια.

d. Avarice and the Principal Adversary

The subject of avarice is developed in 1 Tim 6:6-10. Though the words of this pericope are general enough to apply anywhere, the immediate application is to the financial motive of the opponents: the false teachers in Ephesus are “the ones who desire to be rich” (v. 9) and who “have been led away from the faith” (v. 10).\textsuperscript{49} Driven by a desire for wealth (1 Tim 6:9), the opponents thought “godliness” would fill their pockets (1 Tim 6:5), so they set out to offer their own readings of the law (1 Tim 1:7). The remainder of 1 Tim 6:9 seems to support the view that the opponents were initially drawn away from the apostolic gospel because of their greed. The avaricious, Paul says, are lured into sin, ensnared by the devil, and controlled by a range of evil urges that lead to their eternal destruction. Though the principal adversary is not explicitly mentioned in v. 9, Paul probably intends his readers to understand the term παγιδα (παγίς, “trap” or

\textsuperscript{46} See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section two.

\textsuperscript{47} Calvin, \textit{Comm.} 2 Tim 3:2-4.

\textsuperscript{48} See the full discussion of this point in chapter five, section two.

\textsuperscript{49} See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section three.
“snare”) here as a παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου, as in 1 Tim 3:7 and 2 Tim 2:26. In the latter text, Paul clearly pictures the opponents as those who have somehow been captured by the devil, and who are presently carrying out his purposes.\(^{50}\) This is consistent with 1 Tim 4:1, where the false teachers are depicted as demonic middlemen (as discussed above). It seems that in 1 Tim 6:9 Paul provides us with a glimpse of the backstory. The devil, Paul avers, gained a foothold through the opponents’ desire for financial gain. Their reach for riches led the opponents beyond the boundary of the Pauline community and into the snare of the devil.

3. Assessment of Korinna Zamfir’s Recent Suggestion

The cumulative case that the opponents spurned the apostolic gospel is strong. It is also abundantly clear that these former insiders now constitute a hostile force, a menace to the community of faith in Ephesus. We must, then, question Zamfir’s recent counsel. Zamfir cautions interpreters of the PD about identifying with the judgment of the author and consequently interpreting the restrictions he imposes as a necessary step to counter false teaching that endangers the Christian community.\(^{51}\) She claims, “Although sound doctrine is a central concept, the content of this ‘orthodoxy’ is hardly defined.”\(^{52}\) Thus, Zamfir refuses to make judgments about the opponents’ theological views or moral standing. But, as I have endeavored to show, on numerous occasions Paul indicates that the opponents have turned away from the gospel. Paul does in these letters at least briefly articulate his “gospel” (see ἐὐαγγέλιον in 1 Tim 1:11; 2 Tim 1:8-10; 2:8). It is the message of Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, who has now been raised from the dead (2 Tim 2:8). In 2 Tim 1:8-10, Paul stresses the action of God in saving his people on the basis of grace, grace given in Christ Jesus before the ages began and now revealed through the appearing of the Savior. Moreover the truth of the gospel is “enshrined” in the faithful sayings (1 Tim 1:15; 2:15-3:1; 4:8-10; 2 Tim 2:11-13; see also Titus 3:4-8),\(^{53}\) and the content of the gospel is spelled out elsewhere in the letters (e.g., 1 Tim 2:5-6; 3:16). Furthermore, this “gospel” (ἐὐαγγέλιον) is clearly connected to “the healthy

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\(^{50}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.


\(^{52}\) Zamfir, *Men and Women in the Household of God*, 165. See also my critique of Zamfir in chapter two.

\(^{53}\) “Enshrined” is Marshall’s term (“Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earlier Christianity,” 8).
teaching” in 1 Tim 1:10-11.\textsuperscript{54} Short of suggesting that the author wholly misrepresented his opponents,\textsuperscript{55} the only conclusion that is consistent with the evidence of the letters is that the opponents rejected the apostolic gospel.

C. What Can We Conclude About the Opponents’ Doctrines/Practices?

Since the opponents came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus, I have suggested that we should begin by considering whether their teaching might have stemmed from the complexity of Paul’s views. In my assessment, the opponents’ teaching, as it is described in the explicit and implicit sections of the letters, is best classified as an erroneous eschatological position that derived from Pauline doctrine. Each doctrinal/ethical issue raised in the letters can be explained as a distortion of Paul’s teaching.

1. Resurrection as a Purely Spiritual Event, Fully Realized in the Present

The central statement about what precisely the opponents were teaching is found in 2 Tim 2:18: they were “declaring that the resurrection has already taken place” (λέγοντες [τὴν] ἀνάστασιν ἤδη γεγονέναι). I have argued that the most likely interpretation of 2 Tim 2:18 is that the opponents immaterialized the resurrection.\textsuperscript{56} For the false teachers in Ephesus, ἀνάστασις was a purely spiritual event, fully realized in the present. This notion of resurrection likely led to a confusion of the times: believing they had been raised, the opponents thought they were living only in the age to come, rather than in the overlap of the ages.

Such a view could have easily derived from Paul’s teaching. The most likely scenario is that the opponents misconstrued the Pauline doctrine of the present new life in Christ, claiming that the only resurrection was the mystical resurrection, which took place

\textsuperscript{54} For a thorough discussion of the gospel in the PD, see Lau, Manifest in Flesh, 260-279, who rightly concludes that we find in these letters “a faithful but renewed expression of the apostolic gospel” (278-279). Marshall, “Book of 1 Timothy,” 803, says: “For a letter that is of necessity much concerned with false teaching and congregational order, 1 Timothy contains a warm theology of salvation that preserves the mystery of the gospel and emphasizes the primacy of grace.”

\textsuperscript{55} Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 171, says: “Any conclusions drawn from polemical accusations are hazardous” (emphasis added). On the contrary, I have argued that, while we should be alert to the possibility of exaggeration (following Barclay, Obeying the Truth, 37; Sumney, Identifying Paul’s Opponents, 97) the letters likely reflect fairly accurately what Paul saw to be the main points of contention, and, even in cases of polemical hyperbole, we find a reliable core, because hyperbole is exaggeration of truth. See the full discussion in chapter one.

\textsuperscript{56} See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
at conversion/baptism. It will be helpful to recall the three resurrection “moments” Wright finds in Paul’s teaching: 1) the bodily resurrection of Jesus, 2) the future bodily resurrection of those who belong to Jesus, and 3) “the anticipation of the second, on the basis of the first, in terms of present Christian living, to which ‘resurrection’ language applies as a powerful metaphor.” The life of the believer is presently, metaphorically, one of “resurrection,” referring in Paul to the forgiveness of sins and to a new way of life. I have suggested that it is this notion the false teachers in Ephesus misconstrued. Given the prominence of resurrection/new life language in Paul’s letters (e.g., Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:5; Col 2:12), it is reasonable to conclude that the Pauline community in Ephesus would have been exposed to this third “moment.”

In sum, it appears that the opponents distorted Paul’s doctrine of present participation in Christ’s death and resurrection. The affirmation of the doctrine of participation locates the opponents securely within the Christian movement; participation presupposes some acknowledgement of Christ’s death and resurrection. But we have insufficient evidence to make suggestions about what exactly the opponents might have affirmed or denied about Christ’s resurrection. Did they affirm the bodily resurrection of Christ but somehow think that believers were raised only spiritually? Alternatively, did they hold what would later be referred to as a docetic view of Christ? The explicit and implicit units of 1 and 2 Timothy simply do not provide us with sufficient data to answer such questions. What we can conclude, however, is that the opponents spiritualized the believer’s resurrection, which was tantamount to denying the future, bodily resurrection. This, for Paul, is to deny the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:12-19). Whatever the false teachers may or may not have said themselves about Christ’s resurrection, the fact that their eschatological formulation had no place for a future harvest (1 Cor 15:20) was alone sufficient for Paul to object: “they have thrown the faith of some into confusion” (2 Tim 2:18). For Paul, the future, bodily resurrection of those who are in Christ is no trivial detail; it is an integral part of the gospel message.

2. Marriage and Motherhood as Suitable Only for the Old Order

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57 Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 271.
58 The immediate context also suggests that a misinterpretation of Pauline doctrine lies behind 2 Tim 2:18. The hymn in 2:8-13 appears to affirm the doctrine of present participation in Christ’s death and resurrection taught elsewhere by Paul, but it also stresses the incomplete nature of this participation. See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section four.
In 1 Tim 4:3, Paul states plainly that the opponents forbid marriage (κωλυόντων γαμεῖν), which likely means they called for abstention from sexual activity.\(^{59}\) Given the strong endorsement of marriage and motherhood elsewhere in the oppositional units (1 Tim 2:15; 5:14-16), it is more likely that the opponents were prohibiting marriage in general, rather than exogamous marriages. It is noteworthy that, though Paul does go on in 1 Tim 4:3b-5 to combat the opponents’ food asceticism, he does not comment in this pericope on the opponents’ prohibition of marriage. By the time the reader comes to 1 Tim 4:1-5, it is as if the false teachers’ position on marriage has already been addressed.

I have argued that Paul addresses the opponents’ position on marriage in 1 Tim 2:15; he uses the obscure term τεκνογονία (“childbearing”) to combat their prohibition of marriage and motherhood.\(^{60}\) Paul has in 1 Tim 2:11-14 been thinking of the influence of the opponents, and he has addressed their influence by turning to the Genesis narrative, following the story from creation (v. 13) to fall (v. 14). Thus, the most likely reading of v. 15 is that the motherhood language of Genesis, which is found in the next three scenes of Eve’s story (Gen 3:15-16; 20; 4:1), prompted Paul to target the opponents with the term τεκνογονία. The women in Ephesus, Paul says, “will be saved through (good works like) childbearing.” Because this language is so unlike anything Paul utters elsewhere, it is highly probable that v. 15a is intended to be a direct response to the opponents’ claims. The provocative statement is designed to move marriage and motherhood from the inappropriate side of the spectrum, where the opponents locate it, to the side of good works.

Based on the brief comments in 1 Tim 4:3 and 1 Tim 2:15, it seems that the false teachers in Ephesus banned both marriage and procreation,\(^{61}\) claiming that these somehow disqualified women from or endangered salvation. The eschatological misconception of 2 Tim 2:18 accounts for the opponents’ stance on marriage and motherhood. It seems most plausible that the opponents, having come from within the Pauline community in Ephesus, sought immediate application of Pauline teaching similar to that contained in 1 Cor 7:29-31, a passage where Paul indicates that the present order

\(^{59}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section three.
\(^{60}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter three, section two.
\(^{61}\) This conclusion is corroborated by Paul’s words in 1 Tim 5:14-15. Here, he depicts the traditional household as a stronghold for Christian women: the decision to re-enter fully into family life (i.e., marriage and motherhood) will place the younger widows beyond the influence of the opponents. See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section two.
of things (which includes marriage) is not ultimate. 62 I have pointed out that 1 Corinthians was written while Paul was in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8), and suggested it is reasonable to conclude that the teaching of 1 Corinthians reflects Paul’s teaching/preaching in Ephesus when he ministered in the city. 63 Thus, it is probable that Paul’s teaching on marriage would have been known in Ephesus. I have argued above that the opponents thought they had been projected into the age to come. The consummation of the present age would have meant the dissolution of marriage; therefore, the traditional female roles in the household would have been deemed inappropriate: marriage and motherhood would have been serious violations of God’s order “in the resurrection.”

3. Food as Spiritually Insignificant

It is also clear from 1 Tim 4:3 that the opponents prohibited certain foods (ἀπέχεσθαι βρωμάτων), but we cannot know which foods the opponents proscribed, because this is the only place in the explicit and implicit units where the false teachers’ food asceticism is mentioned. 64 I have noted that we find not a single reference to circumcision in all of 1 and 2 Timothy (compare Titus 1:10). In my judgment, this is a significant silence. Aside from the connection between the opponents and the law, there is nothing in the oppositional units to suggest that the opponents had a Jewish background. Even their use of the law, I will argue below, is not an incontrovertible indication of Jewish identity. There is insufficient evidence, then, to suggest that the opponents were insisting on Jewish regulations about food.

The more likely option is that the opponents’ food asceticism was related to their eschatological misconception. Lane has suggested that, in Luke 24:42, Jesus indicated by his own example that the resurrection diet consists of fish and honeycomb. 65 It is more plausible, since the opponents have defected from the Pauline community, that they expanded some of Paul’s teaching on food (e.g., Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 8:1-13). The example par excellence is 1 Cor 8:8: “‘Food will not bring us close to God.’ We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.” For Paul, food is spiritually insignificant. From this sort of Pauline teaching, the opponents probably derived a resurrection diet, though, again, we cannot be certain which precise foods they proscribed.

62 Hays, First Corinthians, 127.
63 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section three.
64 See the discussion of βρωμα in chapter two, section three.
65 Lane, “1 Tim. IV 1-3,” 166.
An eschatological dualism best accounts for the statements that immediately follow 1 Tim 4:3. First, we should recall Paul’s rebuttal of the opponents’ food restrictions (1 Tim 4:3b-5). The center of the rebuttal is the belief that God’s earthly creation is good. I have noted that we find no evidence in 1 Tim 4:3b-5 to suggest that the opponents’ view of creation was based on a belief in devolution in the godhead; thus, there is nothing especially “Gnostic” about their position on food.⁶⁶ I have also noted that Paul’s remark about all food being set apart as holy (1 Tim 4:5) suggests that the opponents banned certain foods because they considered them to be tainted, unholy, or unspiritual. This is one of only two NT passages where anything other than a person is said to be sanctified (see also ἁγιάζω in Matt 23:17, 19).⁶⁷ Such a strong statement probably is a response to the opponents’ disdain of earthly/material things, including certain foods, because of their understanding of the dawn of an eschatological/spiritual way of life. Second, though their food asceticism is not mentioned explicitly outside of 1 Tim 4:3, Paul does refer to the false teachers’ extreme practices as “physical training” in 1 Tim 4:8.⁶⁸ Having just pinpointed two specific practices—they are forbidding marriage and ordering people to abstain from certain foods” (1 Tim 4:3)—Paul most likely is still thinking of these practices (and perhaps others) when he uses the expression “physical training” in the subsequent pericope. In 1 Tim 4:8, Paul classifies the opponents’ practices as bodily training of a temporary nature, perhaps precisely because they were advocating a spiritual, eschatological experience.

4. Gnosis as a Claim of More Complete Knowledge, Based on a Perceived Eschatological Vantage Point

According to 1 Tim 6:20, the opponents’ teaching was going by the guise, “knowledge” (γνῶσις).⁶⁹ γνῶσις was a widely used term, one that could be applied to nearly any body of religious teaching. We should not, then, draw any “Gnostic” conclusions from the occurrence of this term alone. Since γνῶσις is such a nebulous term, the clearer parts of 1 and 2 Timothy must dictate the way we explain the word in 1 Tim 6:20. Paul’s use of ὑποκατασκευαστής (τῆς ὑποκατασκευαστῆς γνώσεως) suggests that the opponents

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⁶⁶ See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section three.
⁶⁷ Trebilco, “The Goodness and Holiness of the Earth and the Whole Creation (1 Timothy 4.1-5),” 210-211.
⁶⁸ See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section one.
⁶⁹ See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section five.
were referring to their teaching as \( \gamma\nu\omega\sigma\varsigma \). Telling as well is the fact that Paul uses \( \epsilon\pi\gamma\nu\omega\varsigma \) when he refers to the “knowledge” of the truth (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7).

Towner has demonstrated that 1 Tim 6:20-21a and 2 Tim 2:15-18 bear a striking resemblance.\(^{70}\) From this, he concludes that at the very center of the opponents’ \( \gamma\nu\omega\sigma\varsigma \) was the belief that the resurrection had already occurred. Building on Towner’s work, I have proposed that the opponents claimed a special \( \gamma\nu\omega\sigma\varsigma \) because they thought themselves to be current citizens of the age to come. As with the opponents’ claims about marriage and food, Pauline teaching probably precipitated the claim to a unique knowledge. It was Paul himself who had contrasted present, partial knowledge with a future, more complete knowledge: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12). According to Hays, the contrast in 1 Cor 13:12 is clearly “between the present age and the age to come.”\(^{71}\) Again, I note that 1 Corinthians was written while Paul ministered in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8), so it is probable that the same type of teaching, teaching about a future, more complete knowledge, would have been circulated by Paul in Ephesus. The false teachers, thinking they had been projected into the age to come, laid claim to a more complete knowledge, a knowledge they thought enabled them to see things in the Scriptures that others could not see.

5. The Law as Sourcebook for Those with “Eschatological Eyes”

That the opponents employed the law is evident from Paul’s use of the term \( \nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\delta\alpha\alpha\varsigma\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\varsigma \) (1 Tim 1:7).\(^{72}\) Given the extended discussion of \( \delta\nu\mu\omicron\omicron\varsigma \) in 1 Tim 1:8-11, and especially the connection between the catalog of vice-doers and the Decalogue in vv. 9-10, it is highly unlikely that anything other than the OT law is in view in 1 Tim 1:7.\(^{73}\) The opponents sought an authoritative teaching position in the Christian community, and the OT law had an important place in their teaching activities. The frequency with which Paul alludes to the OT in the oppositional units strengthens the case that the opponents

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\(^{70}\) Towner, “Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm,” 104–105.

\(^{71}\) Hays, *First Corinthians*, 229.

\(^{72}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section one.

\(^{73}\) Contra Hoag, “The Teaching on Riches in 1 Timothy in Light of *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon of Ephesus,” 214, who proposes that cultic laws, advocated and enforced by rich Ephesians in service to Artemis, are in view in 1 Tim 1:7.
used the law, but the variety of allusions weakens the case that the opponents focused on Genesis.\footnote{Contra Schlarb, \textit{Die gesunde Lehre}, 83-133, who argues that the opponents wanted to return to a Pre-fall state, where there was no marriage and where meat was not eaten. I have found the following allusions: Exod 20/Deut 5 (the Decalogue) in 1 Tim 1:9-10; Job 1-2 in 1 Tim 1:20; Gen 2-4 in 1 Tim 2:13-15; Gen 1 in 1 Tim 4:3b-5; Num 16 and Isa 26 in 2 Tim 2:19; Exod 7-9 (the magicians) in 2 Tim 3:8-9. Paul’s use of certain OT texts will be discussed below under section two.}

The problem, Paul explains in 1 Tim 1:8-11, is not that the opponents wielded the law, but that they did not wield it properly.\footnote{See the full discussion and notes in chapter three, section one.} The law is good as it is employed according to the divine design (v. 8). By disregarding the directions of the lawgiver, the opponents have become guilty of some unlawful use of the Mosaic law. The clear point of contention in 1 Tim 1:9-10 is: \textit{for whom} was the Mosaic law instituted? In Paul’s theology, the law is not meant for believers, because believers have been transferred from the realm where the law, sin, and death exercise dominion to the realm of righteousness (v. 9a).\footnote{See the discussion of this point, and especially the way it meshes with Paul’s other statements about Scripture (e.g., 2 Tim 3:16-17), in chapter three, section one.} Since 1 Tim 1:8-11 clearly is a response to the false teachers (\textit{θέλοντες εἶναι νομοδιδάσκαλοι}, 1:7), and since the thrust of the section is that the law was not instituted for the righteous, we may conclude with confidence that the opponents were misusing the Mosaic law \textit{by applying it to believers in a way that dissatisfied Paul.}

First Timothy 1:4 allows us to be more precise. Given that the first use of the term \textit{µῦθος} and the only occurrence of the term \textit{γενεαλογία} are found in such close proximity to the term \textit{νομοδιδάσκαλος} (1:4, 7), I have suggested that it is most likely the opponents’ \textit{imaginative reading of the OT that Paul classifies as “myths and genealogies.”}\footnote{See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section one.} I have argued that Paul’s use of \textit{µῦθος} reveals basic but important facts about the opponents’ teaching. Here in 1 Tim 1:4, Paul disapproves of the opponents’ “myths” precisely because they are connected to some \textit{alternative soteriological arrangement} (discussed above). Additionally, I have noted that it is probably significant that in 1 Tim 4:7 “myths” are contrasted with “godliness” (\textit{εὐσέβεια}), a term that in these letters has both a theological and an ethical facet.\footnote{See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section one.} It seems likely that the opponents’ “myths” have \textit{behavioral implications}. The fact that \textit{µῦθος} occurs three times in 1 and 2 Timothy (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim 4:4), while \textit{γενεαλογία} occurs only once (1 Tim 1:4), could suggest that...
“genealogies” played a minor role in the opponents’ teaching. They are perhaps best thought of simply as a prelude to the opponents’ imaginative stories, which stemmed from the OT law, and which promoted an alternative gospel and way of life.

The opponents’ speculative readings of the law can be explained by their erroneous eschatology. I maintain that an element of the opponents’ perceived eschatological existence was a hermeneutical awakening; because they thought they were living only in the age to come, and thus laid claim to a more complete knowledge, the opponents thought they had eyes to see “new” things in the Scriptures. As I have attempted to show, the other strands of the opponents’ teaching can be easily explained as a distortion of Pauline doctrine, so it is probably best to think of the opponents basing their claims on Paul’s teaching and then attempting to find further justification for their claims in the law. Therefore, what Paul classifies as “myths and genealogies” is likely the opponents’ reading of the law, which is intended somehow to support their over-realized eschatology. Their eschatological formulation, as we have seen, includes behaviors to which Paul objects (1 Tim 4:3). Furthermore, their formulation has no place for a future harvest (compare 1 Cor 15:20), and this for Paul is an attack on the apostolic gospel itself (as discussed above). It makes perfect sense, then, for Paul to refer to the opponents’ reading of the OT as a mythology, a set of fanciful stories that promotes an alternative gospel and way of life.

Still to be considered is the matter of why the opponents might have turned to the law to find additional support for their “Pauline” eschatology. Is there some element of Paul’s teaching that might have encouraged the opponents to look to the law with “eschatological eyes”? Paul does at times speak of the law in very positive ways: it is “holy,” “good,” and even “spiritual” (Rom 7:12, 14). The law originates with God (the Spirit), partakes of his holiness, and therefore is worthy of great reverence. It is not inconceivable that statements of this sort, if they were known in Ephesus, suggested to the opponents an enduring role for the law. It is highly likely that the opponents agreed with the Pauline assertion: “the law is good” (καλὸς ὁ νόμος). This is the reason, I have argued, that we find in 1 Timothy a shift from “the law is good” (Rom 7:12) to “the law is good, if...” (1 Tim 1:8). Because the opponents in Ephesus endorsed the law, the emphasis in 1 Timothy needed to fall on the goodness of the law as it is rightly interpreted and applied. In Luther’s words, the opponents might have been arguing: “We

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79 See the discussion in Jewett, Romans, 453, 460-461.
are not following human traditions or human interpretations. We establish our idea on Scripture.\footnote{LW 28.229.}

It is perhaps this very point—verisimilitude—that best explains the opponents’ turn to the law. The simplest solution is that the false teachers, having come from within the Pauline community, used the law because they were already accustomed to using it, and because the Pauline community would have expected them to use it. As Paul himself writes, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching” (2 Tim 3:16). That the opponents most likely received remuneration for their teaching is evidence that their disdain for the earthly/material was not entirely consistent. Greed trumped theology, or at least so it seems. The opponents may have turned to the law, then, even if they did not find an enduring role for it, simply because finding support for their ideas in the Scriptures would have made their eschatological claims more believable, thus winning them more (paying) followers.

6. Assessment of “Gnostic/Incipient Gnostic-Jewish” Identifications

“Gnostic” systems of aeons standing in genealogical relationship with one another. I have found no evidence to suggest that for the opponents γνῶσις was a knowledge that released the soul from enslavement to the material world, nor have I found evidence to substantiate the claim that the opponents’ negative view of creation was based on a belief in devolution in the godhead. Moreover, I have found no evidence in the context of 1 Tim 1:4, or elsewhere in the letters, to suggest that the opponents were involved in aeon and archon speculation. Rather, I have argued above that their γνῶσις, asceticism, and “myths and genealogies” are connected to an erroneous eschatological position, which probably derived from Paul’s view of the present new life in Christ. In my assessment, “Gnostic” identifications are guilty of reading into 1 and 2 Timothy far later and more complex systems of thought. Even the label “proto-Gnostic,” I have proposed, is problematic, for such a label defines the antecedent in terms of the consequent, thereby oversimplifying the task of connecting the incipient form of an ideology to a much later form.

Additionally, there appears to be insufficient evidence to posit a Jewish background for the opponents. Features of the opponents that some scholars have taken to be indications of Jewish identity include their use of the law, their food regulations,

82 Cognizant of the debate surrounding the definition of “Gnosticism,” I am here allowing those scholars who draw “Gnostic” conclusions about the opponents in the PD to give shape to my critique. See my discussion of the label “Gnosticism” in chapter one. 83 Similarly, Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 228-230; Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 172-176. Using the typological model proposed by Christoph Markschies (Gnosis. An Introduction, trans. John Bowden [London: T&T Clark, 2003], 16–17), Zamfir evaluates the data of the PD and concludes, “Reference to gnosis in itself, without any evidence for the adherence of the opponents to a (dualistic) system based on the idea of a fallen creation and redemption through special insight received via exclusive revelation by the intervention of a redeemer, without a theory of emanations or any explicit statement about the fallen or evil character of creation, is not sufficient to prove that [the opponents] were indeed Gnostics” (175).

84 Streett, They Went Out from Us, 128.
85 The degree to which the opponents should be thought of as “Jewish” is debated. Schlarb, Die gesunde Lehre, 83–92, discusses OT texts that may have been employed, but this does not necessarily prove that the opponents had a Jewish background. Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 46, claims that a Jewish basis for the opposition is beyond question, though their “Jewishness,” he says, can only be part of the story. Likewise, Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius, 230, says the Jewish dimension is pronounced, though he admits that identifying the opponents as “Jewish” does not readily explain a number of elements of their teaching. Houlden, The Pastoral Epistles, 43, writes, “It is far from obvious that there is much reality in the Jewish quality of these heretics.”
their alleged anti-Gentile mentality, and their alleged association with magic. Mounce, for example, emphasizes the opponents’ sectarianism and argues further: “If the opponents used magic, there is a parallel with the ‘itinerant Jewish exorcists’ (Acts 19:13) in Ephesus with whom Paul had dealt earlier.”86 In my investigation of the explicit and implicit units, I have found no clear evidence to substantiate the claim that the false teachers used magic.87 Second Timothy 3:6-7, which will be discussed below, suggests that the opponents had successfully proselytized some pagan women in Ephesus; therefore, the opponents should not be thought of as exclusivists with an anti-Gentile mentality. The opponents’ food regulations, I have argued, are best explained as being connected to their eschatological dualism. This leaves only their use of the law as possible evidence of the opponents’ Jewish background, but their affiliation with the law does not necessarily prove the Jewish affiliation of the false teachers, because the Scriptures were the common ground of Christians of any previous religious commitment.88 It is just as likely that the opponents were Gentile “converts,” who, after coming into the Pauline community, grew accustomed to using the law.

One of the unique aspects of this investigation has been its scope: we have collected data from the two documents dispatched to Ephesus (1 and 2 Timothy), but not from the letter purportedly sent to Crete (Titus). In my view, the difference in destination is a factor significant enough to warrant a separate investigation of the opponents in Titus. Insisting on a separate study for Titus immediately removes the two most stable planks in the argument for the opponents’ “Jewishness”: 1) only in Titus do we find a clear reference to circumcision (1:10), and 2) only in Titus are the opponents’ myths referred to as “Jewish” (Ἰουδαϊκοὶ μύθοις, 1:14). Limiting myself to the evidence of 1 and 2 Timothy, I can say only that it is possible the opponents had a Jewish background. I cannot suggest this as a probable conclusion.

D. What Can We Conclude About the Opponents’ Operation/“Ministry”? The evidence indicates that the opponents had an active “didactic/evangelistic ministry” in Ephesus, for which they received remuneration, and that they had

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86 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, lxx.
87 See the full discussion in chapter five, section two. Contra Lightfoot, Biblical Essays, 411-412; Spicq, Les Épîtres Pastorales, 1:104–110; Gunther, St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background, 12; Pietersen, The Polemic of the Pastorals, 131. All these find hints of sorcery/thaumaturgy.
88 Zamfir, Men and Women in the Household of God, 177n60.
considerable success in recruiting a following, especially (though not exclusively) a following of women.

1. Remuneration for “Ministry”

Above, I have compiled the evidence that suggests the opponents received payment for their teaching. Here, I will provide only a few summary statements to set up the discussion of 1 Tim 2:9-15, 1 Tim 5:11-15, and 2 Tim 3:6-7. The letters indicate that “godliness” (εὐσέβεια) was for the opponents a profit-making enterprise. Their “obvious religiousness,” that is, their specious claims and extreme practices, enabled them to secure a body of supporters, which was most likely composed of both men and women.

2. Success among Women in the Church

I have unearthed ample evidence to conclude that the opponents had considerable success in deceiving/recruiting women from within the Pauline community in Ephesus. One key passage is 1 Tim 2:9-15. The language of deception, which Paul uses in 1 Tim 2:14, strongly suggests that certain women within the Christian community were falling prey to the false teachers. I have argued that here Paul recalls the fact that in the Genesis account of the fall the language of deception is used only in reference to Eve; the woman alone cries out, “The serpent deceived me” (Gen 3:13 LXX). I have proposed that Paul stresses this moment because of the similar deception of women that was taking place in Ephesus. Having been seduced by “demonic doctrines” (1 Tim 4:1), some women within the Pauline community were abandoning their role in the home in favor of the opponents’ resurrection teaching. The opponents’ over-realized eschatology with its sociological implications (i.e., the rejection of marriage and motherhood) probably had an enormous appeal to the woman of the first century, whose existence within the traditional household was defined by biology and social bias.

Most likely, the throwing off of their role in the house either led some Christian women to reject their role in the house of God or caused Paul to anticipate this as the inevitable next step. It is for this reason that Paul reminds Christian women of their proper role in the congregational setting (1 Tim 2:11-12). The influence of the opponents on some women within the Pauline community almost certainly occasioned the

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89 See especially the subsection “Wickedness, Divisiveness, and a Mask of Godliness.”
90 See the full discussion and notes in chapter three, section two.
91 Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 414.
instructions in vv. 11-12. However, I have proposed that Paul’s prohibition in v. 12—“but I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man”—does not seem to be limited to women who were teaching the false doctrine of the opponents. As I hope to have demonstrated, this would require an irregular use of the verb διδάσκω. Additionally, in vv. 11-12 Paul uses the generic singular, γυνή, which suggests that all women in the Christian community in Ephesus are in view. It could be that Paul prohibits all Christian women in Ephesus from teaching because so many women had strayed after the false teaching, though this option requires what I consider to be a less likely reading of v. 13.

First Timothy 2:9-10 indicates that there were wealthy women in the Christian community in Ephesus, and, since in this pericope Paul affiliates these wealthy women with the false teachers, it is reasonable to conclude that at least some of them were contributing financially to the opponents’ operation. But 1 Tim 2:9-10 has also presented us with a quandary. The cosmetic items Paul mentions as being inappropriate for the Christian woman are the items that were known to be the standard accoutrements of promiscuous women in the ancient world. It is highly unlikely that the opponents, who probably advocated the celibate life (1 Tim 2:15; 4:3), were directly responsible for this proclivity for promiscuous attire. Thus, following Towner’s proposal, I have argued that another influence is at work in vv. 9-10.92 A likely scenario is that the opponents swayed some women in the Pauline community to reject their place in the home, and some of these same women went on to adopt the social mores of the “new Roman woman.” The opponents’ teaching, then, could function as an entryway into other ways of living which, in Paul’s judgment, displeased God. This conclusion finds verification in 1 Tim 5:11-12. Here we find evidence that suggests the opponents had recruited certain widows from within the Christian community in Ephesus, and some of these same widows were considering marriage with unbelievers.93 Thus, we may say that the opponents posed a threat to the Pauline community, not just because of what they promulgated, but also because of what they precipitated.

That some widows within the Christian community had been deceived by the opponents is clear from Paul’s comments in 1 Tim 5:11-15. Against a number of interpreters, I have argued that in the larger unit, 5:9-16, Paul is not concerned to limit a particular leadership ministry for women; rather, Paul here has in mind a special group of

93 See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section two.
saints worthy of church economic support. Paul’s concern in the passage is to outline both the widow who is eligible for community support and the widow who is not eligible for such support. In vv. 11-15, it becomes clear why Paul seeks to restrict the church’s charity toward the χήρα. The problem was not that the fellowship of widows had grown too large for the church to support. We find in 1 Timothy numerous suggestions of financial stability, perhaps even surplus (1 Tim 2:9-10; 6:6-10, 17-19). The problem, rather, was that the circle of church-supported widows had enlarged to include some younger women whom Paul did not find worthy of support. I have argued that it is because these younger widows were involved with the opponents that Paul tells Timothy to “refuse” them.

The clearest indications that the widows of 1 Tim 5:11-15 were involved with the false teachers are found in v. 13 and v. 15. In v. 13, Paul describes the younger widows as meandering gossips, those who travel around “saying things which ought not to be said” (λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα). Whether the verb λαλέω here refers to more casual conversation or to more formal proclamation, the widows are promoting a message that Paul finds problematic. Because in v. 15 Paul affiliates some of the younger widows with Satan, the most probable conclusion is that these widows were passing on the teaching of the opponents, which Paul has already in 1 Timothy classified as Satanic/demonic (4:1). I have also pointed out that, if these younger widows were already included in the circle of church-supported widows, then the Pauline community was unwittingly contributing to the opponents’ operation. The younger widows may have designated some of the funds they received from the church for their own teachers, those who had taught them “the things which ought not to be said.” Alternatively, the younger widows may have kept all the church-provided funds for themselves. Either way, because these widows were passing on the teaching of the opponents, it seems likely that the Christian community in Ephesus was unintentionally funding false teaching. This perhaps accounts for the remarkable amount of attention widows receive in 1 Timothy: over ten percent of the letter’s total content is devoted to limiting the church’s charity toward the χήρα.

3. Success among Women Outside the Church

I have also found evidence that indicates the opponents had some success among women outside the Pauline community in Ephesus. In 2 Tim 3:6, Paul explains that the

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94 See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section two.
95 Compare Titus 1:11.
false teachers have entered “the houses” (τὰς ὁικίας), perhaps signifying those houses well known to all because of their wealthy inhabitants, where they have “captivated” (ἀληθείας) the female residents. Though many commentators very quickly claim that Christian households or house churches are in view here, I have argued that v. 7 makes this interpretation unlikely. In v. 7, Paul states that these women have not arrived at a “knowledge of truth.” Every other time the phrase “knowledge of truth” is employed in the PD, the thought seems to be of conversion. In 1 Tim 2:4, the expression is linked with the verb σωζω. In 2 Tim 2:25, it is coupled with μετάνοια, the action of turning from unbelief and sin to God. Furthermore, in Titus 1:1, the phrase is connected with εὐσέβεια, which in these letters refers to genuine Christian existence. It is most probable, then, that here in 2 Tim 3:6-7 we find a unique reference to the false teachers proselytizing pagan women. Titus 3:3 lends weight to this interpretation, for there Paul describes existence prior to conversion, and the language he uses is very similar to the description of the “weak women” here in 2 Tim 3:6. The opponents had a pervasive ministry in Ephesus. They, too, were “evangelists,” and their scope was wide.

4. The Place of Women in the Circle of the Opponents

Though the passages discussed above indicate that the opponents had been successful in recruiting women in Ephesus, the evidence does not support the conclusion that the opponents exclusively targeted women. More likely is the conclusion that the opponents set out to recruit as many (paying) converts as possible. That the false teachers were driven by greed strongly suggests that they would not have limited their scope to the female population in Ephesus. I have suggested, however, that the opponents’ over-realized eschatology with its sociological implications probably had a strong appeal to women in particular. Upon discovering that women especially responded positively to their teaching, it seems likely that the opponents would have then focused their efforts on the female population. But this “on-the-ground” development does not mean that the opponents’ group was composed only of women. We have insufficient evidence to suggest a ratio of women to men, but the mention of male opponents in the explicit units (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17) indicates that the group certainly was composed of both genders.

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96 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section two.
97 See also ἐπεγνωκόσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν in 1 Tim 4:3.
98 Compare 2 Tim 4:5: ἔργον ποίησον εὑρεγγελίστο. 
I also cannot suggest as a probable conclusion that women held *leadership positions in the opponents’ circle*. Though there is ample evidence to conclude that women were adherents, and some evidence to suggest that women were promulgators of the false teaching (1 Tim 5:13; possibly 1 Tim 2:12), I have found no clear evidence in the explicit and implicit units to support the view that women held prominent teaching positions.

5. *Assessment of the Proto-Montanist View*

Primarily, though not exclusively, because of the involvement of women in the promulgation of the false teaching, some scholars have classified the opponents in the PD as Proto-Montanists.\(^99\) According to Pietersen, Montanism emerged in the region east of Philadelphia in the 160s C.E. The founding of the movement is linked not just to Montanus himself, but also to his two female prophets, Prisca/Priscilla and Maximilla. Women featured prominently in Montanism, and many women were ordained as clergy.\(^100\) In my view, there are a number of problems with the Proto-Montanist classification. In addition to the fallacious practice of defining the antecedent in terms of the consequent, a problem with the classification is that, as I have noted above, the evidence of the explicit and implicit units of 1 and 2 Timothy is not sufficiently cogent to conclude that women held prominent teaching positions in the opponents’ group. I can suggest only that the sociological implications of the opponents’ teaching made it highly attractive to women. But this does not necessarily mean that women went on to hold offices in the group. The greatest problem with the Proto-Montanist classification, however, is that I have discovered no evidence to suggest that ecstatic prophecy was a feature of the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy. Ecstatic prophecy, according to Pietersen, was “the main issue” of concern with later Montanism.\(^101\) It is not clear that the opponents in Ephesus claimed to have some special endowment of the Holy Spirit, which was connected with visions and prophecy.\(^102\) On the contrary, Paul states that the opponents have “renounced” (ἀρνέωμαι) the power that comes from the Holy Spirit (2 Tim

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\(^100\) Pietersen, *The Polemic of the Pastorals*, 104.

\(^101\) Ibid. See also Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 87–95, 141–149.

3:5), a strange criticism indeed if the opponents were in reality claiming an overwhelming experience of the Spirit.

E. Composite Sketch

In light of the evidence amassed above, we may sketch the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy as follows. The opponents came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus. At one time, they were perceived as being in good standing within the community, and so were considered to be insiders, though at the time of the writing of 1 and 2 Timothy Paul considered them to be spiritual outsiders. The opponents, however, probably continued to think of themselves as “believers,” “Christians,” and perhaps even as good “Paulinists,” remaining active in the Pauline community in Ephesus.

The dominant critique of the letters is that the opponents rejected the apostolic gospel. For Paul, the decision to reject the apostolic gospel and promulgate an alternative soteriological arrangement marked a “changing of sides.” When he composed the letters, Paul clearly viewed the former insiders as mentally and morally corrupt individuals who had aligned themselves with the chief adversary, Satan. These individuals are now, in Paul’s assessment, enemies of God and the faithful Christian community in Ephesus.

The opponents’ teaching is best described as an erroneous eschatological position that derived from the complexity of Paul’s teaching. For them, ἀνάστασις was a purely spiritual event, one that had been fully realized in the present. This notion of resurrection likely led to a confusion of the ages: believing they had been raised, the opponents thought they were living only in the age to come. This eschatological formulation probably stemmed from the Pauline doctrine of the present new life in Christ; the opponents thought the only resurrection was the mystical resurrection, which took place at conversion/baptism. Irrespective of what the opponents were saying about Christ’s resurrection, immaterializing the believer’s resurrection, which was tantamount to denying the future, bodily resurrection, was in Paul’s assessment an attack on the apostolic gospel. “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised” (1 Cor 15:13).

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103 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section two.
104 Thus, in my view, the evidence of the oppositional units does not support Pietersen’s conclusion that charismatic enthusiasm (i.e., an overwhelming experience of the Spirit) led to the opponents’ wholly realized eschatology (The Polemic of the Pastorals, 115n24).
The opponents’ eschatological formulation also included certain ethical norms. The perceived consummation of the present age meant that marriage and motherhood were inappropriate. This idea probably derived from Pauline teaching similar to that contained in 1 Cor 7:29-31. Additionally, the opponents probably expanded some of Paul’s teaching on food (e.g., Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 8:1-13), specifically his insistence that food is spiritually insignificant, and devised some sort of resurrection diet.

Moreover, thinking they had been projected into the age to come, the false teachers laid claim to a special \( \gamma \nu \omega \sigma \iota \), the more complete knowledge Paul himself reserved for the future (1 Cor 13:12). It seems that an element of the opponents’ perceived eschatological existence was a hermeneutical awakening. Their \( \gamma \nu \omega \sigma \iota \) gave them eyes to see “new” things in the Scriptures. With these “eschatological eyes,” the opponents offered speculative readings of the law to support their resurrection teaching, readings which Paul categorized as “myths and genealogies.” While the false teachers may have found something in Paul’s theology to suggest an enduring role for the law (e.g., Rom 7:12, 14), they most likely turned to the law for practical purposes. Establishing their ideas in the Scriptures would have made their eschatological claims more believable.

The opponents had an active “didactic/evangelistic ministry” in Ephesus, for which they received payment. They likely set out to recruit as large a following, and as large an income, as possible, but found a particularly fruitful field among the women in Ephesus. Both women within the Pauline community and women outside the community fell prey to the false teachers. At least some of these female adherents were wealthy, and they likely contributed to the opponents’ cause. Additionally, at least some of the female adherents, widows from within the Pauline community, were passing on the opponents’ teaching, whether in a casual or more formal way. If these widows were already included in the circle of church-supported widows, then the Pauline community at large was unwittingly contributing financially to the opponents’ operation.

II. Communal Reaction to the Opponents

Having described the opponents as precisely as the primary text allows, I will now provide an account of the communal reaction to the opponents. Once more relying on the evidence uncovered in the explicit and implicit units, \(^{105}\) I will consider how Paul

\(^{105}\) It is possible that Paul responds to the opponents in other ways and in other parts of the letters. Philip H. Towner, “The Function of the Public Reading of Scripture in
addresses the opponents in the letters themselves (i.e., his literary and theological tactics) and how Paul instructs Timothy and the wider faithful community to handle the hostility in Ephesus (i.e., his ministerial directives).

A. Literary and Theological Tactics: How Paul Addresses the Opponents in the Letters Themselves

Within the parameters of the oppositional units, we are able to trace a number of literary and theological maneuvers that are intended to counteract the opponents’ influence and/or to bolster the faithful community’s confidence as they struggle against the opponents. Some of these, such as the way Paul employs vice lists in order to align the false teachers with the wicked, have been dealt with in section one above. Here I will focus on what I consider to be Paul’s most significant maneuvers. These include the way Paul turns features of the opponents against them, his use of the faithful saying formula, the way he relates the Triune God and the principal adversary, Satan, to the opponents, and the way Paul portrays the gospel as an unstoppable force in his own ministry.

1. Features of the Opponents Turned against Them

Paul’s most common maneuver is to use the opponents’ own elements against them. In 1 Tim 1:8-11, he turns the Mosaic law as law against the opponents. A number of times in the oppositional units Paul argues from (or at least makes assertions based upon) the OT, the opponents’ sourcebook (1 Tim 2:13-14; 4:3b-5; 2 Tim 2:19; 3:8-9).

1 Tim 4:13 and in the Biblical Tradition,” SBJT 7 (2003): 44–54, argues that public reading was a way of countering the opponents’ speculative use of the OT. A number of scholars suggest that the qualifications for elders (1 Tim 3:1-7) are intended to be a response to the opponents. See, for example, Marshall, New Testament Theology, 403; Van Neste, Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles, 108, 111; Yarbrough, Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy, 184. Others claim that the entire letters (or at least the entire first letter) should be read as response to the opponents. See, for example, Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 7; Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 10. Sumney, “‘God Our Savior,’” 123, says: “The writer’s primary means of rejecting the false teachers may be the overarching theological perspective formed by the letter [of 1 Timothy] as a whole.” In keeping with the method formulated for this study, I will consider only those portions of the letters where we have the highest degree of probability that the opponents are in view.

Donelson, Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles, 116-117, 127-128, helpfully emphasizes this maneuver: “The author’s basic strategy against these opponents is to employ the dualism of virtue and vice, placing them among the vices, and by a variety of methods to put a lid on theological speculation” (127).

Above, I have discussed the way the motherhood language of Genesis (Gen 3:15-16, 20; 4:1) likely influences Paul’s response to the opponents in 1 Tim 2:15; see the
Additionally, in 1 Tim 6:6-8, Paul converts a key feature of the opponents, their desire for financial gain, into a clear sign of the falsity of their position. I will summarize these moves in turn.

a. The Law Used against the Opponents

In 1 Tim 1:8-11, Paul turns the law against the would-be law-teachers. I have discussed this passage throughout section one above, so I will offer only brief comments here. Paul argues in vv. 8-11 that the Mosaic law was not instituted for the righteous, but for the wicked. He emphasizes this point by crafting a vice list, which is at least partly based on the Decalogue (vv. 9b-10). Paul then associates the opponents in Ephesus with the despicable individuals he has just enumerated (ἀντίκειμαι, v. 10), thereby showing that the opponents are condemned by the very law they aspire to teach (1 Tim 1:7).

b. Arguments against the Opponents from Their Own Sourcebook

Multiple times in the oppositional units Paul draws from the OT, the opponents’ sourcebook. While we have insufficient data to suggest that Paul took up the precise passages the opponents used to support their deviant doctrine, the frequency with which Paul alludes to the OT in the explicit and implicit units suggests that he employs the OT at least partly because he is intent on showing the opponents to be faulty readers of the Scriptures in general.

First, Paul draws from Gen 2-3 to support the restrictions he places upon women at worship (1 Tim 2:13-14). Paul’s reading of Genesis focuses on the order of creation and the moment of deception. For Paul, Adam’s precedence places upon him spiritual responsibility (Gen 2); thus, it is the (qualified) men in Ephesus who are tasked with the formal instruction in the faith as the Christian community gathers for worship (vv. 12-13). In v. 14, Paul recalls the fact that in Gen 3:13 LXX it is the woman who cries out, “The serpent deceived me” (Gen 3:13 LXX). Paul highlights the moment of Eve’s deception because it was at this moment that the serpent subverted the created order by approaching the woman, and the woman embraced false claims. A similar subversion of the order was occurring in Ephesus: the opponents were beguiling certain women with their “demonic doctrines” (1 Tim 4:1). The apostolic interpretation of Gen 2-3 here places the opponents discussion under the subsection “Marriage and Motherhood as Suitable Only for the Old Order.”

108 See the subsection “The Law as Sourcebook for Those with ‘Eschatological Eyes.’”

109 I have rehearsed 1 Tim 2:9-15 in more detail above; see the subsection “Success among Women in the Church.”
in the position occupied by the serpent in Eden; they are shown to be deceivers who disregard the order established by God.

Second, Paul uses Gen 1 to combat the opponents’ food asceticism (1 Tim 4:3b-5). Most likely alluding to Gen 1:29 LXX, Paul indicates that God graciously created food for human nourishment; therefore, believers ought to receive God’s provision with grateful hearts (v. 3b). In contrast to the unfounded orders of the opponents (v. 3a), believers can and should partake of the sustenance God has provided for his creatures, because “every creation of God is good” (v. 4a). Here, Paul alludes to the summary statement of Gen 1:31 LXX; since God pronounces his entire creation “very good,” no food is to be rejected. God’s creation pronouncement “sanctifies” (ἁγιάζω) sustenance, and believer’s acknowledge God’s creative and sanctifying action by receiving food with prayers of thanksgiving (v. 5). On the contrary, by forbidding certain foods, the opponents are ungratefully discarding what God himself has designed and set apart for his creatures. Their claims about food are explicitly in contrast to the Creator’s pronouncement (Gen 1:31).

Third, in 2 Tim 2:19, Paul employs Num 16 and Isa 26 both to strengthen Timothy’s confidence as he ministers amid the false teachers in Ephesus and to call the false teachers to repentance. Despite the fact that the opponents have caused a crisis in the community of faith, Paul writes, “the firm foundation of God still stands.” I have argued that θεολογία here refers to the church, which was in 1 Tim 3:15 called “the house of God,” and which is compared to a “great house” in 2 Tim 2:20-21. By selecting the word “foundation” to refer to the church as a whole, and by locating the “seal” (discussed below) on the “foundation,” Paul stresses the solidity of the true community of the Lord.

According to Paul, the church of God bears a seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.” The two sayings of the seal appear to be the fruits of Paul’s Christological reading of Num 16. He first cites Num 16:5 LXX, a text with which he was well acquainted, specifically referencing the Lord (κύριος), for it is Christ, the one who has purchased a people for his own possession (Titus 2:14), who knows personally the blood-bought remnant. Paul next extracts the essence of Num 16:26-27 and borrows language from Isa 26:13 to add specificity to the congregation of Num 16: the covenant

110 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section three.
111 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
community is composed of those who “name the name of the Lord.” As the covenant community in Numbers was to disassociate itself from the dwellings of the wicked party of Korah, so the new-covenant community in Ephesus, those who name the name of the Lord Jesus, must avoid the profanity of Hymenaeus, Philetus, and the other false teachers in the church who are progressing in ungodliness (2 Tim 2:16-17).

Paul develops this point further in vv. 20-21 by depicting the church as a house filled with two types of individuals, those for honorable use and those for dishonorable use. The one who removes himself entirely from the wickedness in Ephesus will become an “instrument for honorable use;” a sanctified (ἁγιάζω) servant of the master. Sandwiched between Paul’s Christological reading of Num 16 (v. 19) and the call for Timothy to correct the opponents with gentleness (vv. 25-26), Paul probably is thinking here in vv. 20-21 of the conversion of individuals within the opponents’ group. He holds out hope that some of the false teachers in Ephesus will “name the name of the Lord” and depart from the wickedness of their coworkers, thereby showing themselves to be part of the true church that is certain to stand firm (2 Tim 2:19).

Fourth, in 2 Tim 3:8-9, Paul assures Timothy of the demise of those who persist in their opposition to the truth by likening the false teachers in Ephesus to the magicians who opposed Moses (Exod 7-9). When first introduced in the Exodus narrative, Jannes and Jambres are depicted as powerful opponents who are able to perform wonders similar to those of Moses and Aaron (Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7). But by the appearance of the third plague, the magicians can no longer stand toe to toe with Moses; their sorcery is no match for the power of God (Exod 8:18-19). In their final appearance in Exodus, Jannes and Jambres are pictured as helpless men who cannot even protect themselves from divine judgment (Exod 9:11). As Jannes and Jambres gradually were exposed as impotent, so the false teachers, Paul says, eventually will be exposed as ignorant (2 Tim 3:9). Their deceptive arts will fail, and the community will see the opponents’ message for what it truly is—“empty speech.” In sum, Paul sees the false teachers in Ephesus as examples of a recurring pattern of opposition, a pattern with deep roots in Israel’s history, and a pattern that will continue until the second advent of Christ. But tenacity is not to

112 In Exodus, the magicians remain anonymous. The names “Jannes” and “Jambres” are provided in non-canonical writings, such as CD 5.17-19; T. Sol. 25.4; Jan. Jam. See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section two.
113 See the subsection “The Activity of the Triune God with Respect to the Opponents.”
be equated with victory. Based on his reading of opponents of old, Paul is confident that truth will triumph in Ephesus.

c. Avarice as a Sign of the Opponents’ Falseness

In 1 Tim 6:6-8, Paul converts the avarice of the opponents into a clear indication that their eschatological account is empty. The similarities between v. 5 and v. 6 (πορισμός, εὐσέβεια) reveal that Paul is in vv. 6-10 countering the false teachers.\(^\text{114}\) Paul has previously identified “godliness” as the path of eschatological existence (1 Tim 4:6-10),\(^\text{115}\) so he begins 1 Tim 6:6-10 by asserting that “godliness,” which includes the attitude of “contentment,” is indeed “great gain” (v. 6). True εὐσέβεια includes αὐτάρκεια precisely because godliness is the path of *eschatological* existence. Material goods are confined to the κόσμος (v. 7). Therefore, the one who walks the eschatological path of εὐσέβεια will not be ruled by the desire for wealth; rather, he or she will be content with the irreducible necessities of earthly life (v. 8). Paul is clear that an earthly lifestyle of simplicity goes hand in hand with the life that is “both now and in the future” (1 Tim 4:8). Thus, Paul converts a key feature of the opponents—their greed—into an indubitable sign of the falsity of their position. Though the opponents make eschatological claims, their avarice demonstrates that they have strayed from the path of eschatological life.

2. The Faithful Sayings as Quick but Sharp Blows to the Opponents

I have argued that Paul employs the faithful saying formula (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8) to stress soteriological material.\(^\text{116}\) Three of the four faithful sayings in 1 and 2 Timothy occur in oppositional units (1 Tim 2:15-3:1; 4:8-10; 2 Tim 2:11-13). Since the opponents are promulgators of an alternative soteriological arrangement, it is probable that *at least these three* faithful sayings are intended to combat the opponents.\(^\text{117}\) In one fell swoop, Paul heralds the apostolic gospel (and corresponding aspects of the healthy teaching) and casts doubt on the false teaching. I will briefly review

\(^{114}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section one.  
\(^{115}\) See the subsection “The Faithful Sayings as Quick but Sharp Blows to the Opponents.”  
\(^{116}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section one.  
\(^{117}\) Yarbrough, *Paul’s Utilization of Preformed Traditions in 1 Timothy*, 183-187, identifies twelve preformed traditions in 1 Timothy and contends that all twelve apply to the faulty teaching of the opponents. The method I have followed has not allowed me to venture into many of the units where Yarbrough finds preformed traditions (1:15, 17; 2:5-6; 3:16; 5:24-25; 6:11-16). I can, however, concur with Yarbrough that the false teachers are in view in 1:8-10; 3:1 (though I connect the faithful saying formula here to 2:15); 4:8, 9-10b; 6:7, 10a.
the contents of the faithful sayings contained in the explicit and implicit sections of 1 and 2 Timothy.

In 1 Tim 2:15a, which I have discussed in detail above, Paul seeks to move childbearing from the inappropriate side of the spectrum, where the opponents locate it, to the side of good works. Thus, v. 15a is corrective. Paul leaves the battlefield in v. 15b, chooses his own ground, and establishes his position clearly. The final clause, then, is the primary salvation statement.\textsuperscript{118} Taken as a whole, the message of v. 15 is that women with authentic faith will persevere in love, holiness, self-control, and all good works, even childbearing. At once, the opponents’ teaching about marriage and motherhood is denounced and an inseparable link between right belief (faith) and right behavior (good works) is established.

Whether the faithful saying formula found in 1 Tim 4:9 refers back to v. 8 or forward to v. 10, soteriological content is emphasized and competing claims are retorted.\textsuperscript{119} If the formula refers backwards, then the point is that, despite what the opponents aver, their practices are bodily training of a temporary nature, while the practice of godliness (i.e., the ongoing translation of the apostolic gospel into works that are pleasing to God) carries the promise of true eschatological existence/eternal life. If the formula points forward to v. 10, then the focus is on the “Living God” and “Savior,” the one who is able to fulfill the promise of life that is associated with godliness. Paul refers to God the Father as σωτήρ as a way of indicating that the first person of the Trinity is the Great Architect of the redemptive arrangement, the plan the opponents are attempting to adjust. The conclusion of v. 10 (ὅς ἐστιν σωτήρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀνάλογα πιστῶν) establishes an important demarcation with respect to the Father’s soteriological provision; though the scope of the Father’s concern is universal (1 Tim 2:4), the salvation provided by the “Living God” and “Savior” is appropriated by genuine faith, that is, faith that perseveres on the path of godliness.

Second Timothy 2:8 prepares the way for the faithful saying contained in vv. 11-13.\textsuperscript{120} The summary of Paul’s gospel includes elements from Rom 1:3-4, but by reversing the order—bodily resurrection then Davidic descent—Paul refocuses the community’s thinking about resurrection around the past resurrection of Christ, which for him is distinguishable but not separable from the future resurrection of believers. Against the
opponents, the saying contained in vv. 11-13 assures those who have been incorporated into Christ’s death through conversion/baptism of the certainty of future resurrection (v. 11). When Christ returns to consummate his kingdom, those who have endured will take part in his eternal reign (v. 12a), while those who have disclaimed association with Christ will experience rejection (v. 12b). The final line of the faithful saying underscores Christ’s faithfulness to the elect. Christ cannot be untrue to his own nature and purpose of salvation; thus, his character guarantees the preservation of his true yet imperfect people (v. 13).

In sum, the faithful saying of 2 Tim 2:11-13 is an exposition of eschatological salvation that both counters the opponents’ over-realized teaching and implicitly calls them to repentance. Paul’s gospel is one of both realization and anticipation, with the former fortifying the latter; the God who made good his promise to David, who raised Christ from the dead, will indeed resurrect persevering believers to participate in Christ’s eternal reign. Therefore, the opponents’ message is explicitly contrary to the message of “Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David” (v. 8), and should they continue to spurn Christ, replacing his truth with their own γνῶσις (1 Tim 6:20), Christ will say to them, “I never knew you” (v. 12b).

3. The Activity of the Triune God with Respect to the Opponents

Throughout 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul relates God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit to the opponents. God the Father is pictured as the provider of repentance. In 2 Tim 2:24-25a, Paul explains that a servant of the Lord must “be gentle toward all, proficient in teaching, patient, instructing the opponents with meekness.” In the second half of v. 25, Paul provides the reason for this disposition: “perhaps God may grant them repentance to a knowledge of truth.” In view is the radical transformation of the person who embraces the apostolic gospel.121 As the Great Architect of the redemptive arrangement (discussed above), it is the Father’s prerogative to gift repentance to whomever he wills. Timothy is to exercise educative influence in Ephesus, but “repentance to a knowledge of truth” is something only God can provide. The thought here is positive: “Since the conversion of a man is in God’s hands, who knows whether those who today seem unteachable may be suddenly changed by God’s power into different men?”122

121 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
122 Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 2:25.
Christ is depicted as the one who will deliver the decisive blow to the opponents who do not align themselves with the apostolic gospel. It is clear from 1 Tim 4:1 and 2 Tim 3:1 that Paul is concerned to locate the opponents in the panorama of the great end-time conflict. He uses the phrases “later times” (1 Tim 4:1) and “last days” (2 Tim 3:1) synonymously; in view is the interval between the advents of Christ. Similarly, in 2 Tim 4:1-5, Paul references a future time (v. 3) and proceeds to describe the present problem in Ephesus. The thought is of a continuation of the present situation. Significant in 2 Tim 4:1-5 is the fact that Paul opens with the adjuration: “I solemnly urge you, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge both the living and the dead, and by his appearing (ἐπιφάνεια) and by his kingdom” (v. 1). Epiphany language can refer to the first advent of Christ, to the results of this first coming, and, as here in 2 Tim 4:1, to the second advent of Christ. The thought in 2 Tim 4:1-5, then, is that the false teachers in Ephesus stand in a long line of adversaries that will lead up to the time of Christ’s return, when the whole of humanity—even those who say the resurrection is past!—will answer to Christ Jesus. In 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul consistently portrays the opponents as eschatological enemies, those who are situated between the advents of Christ, enclosed within the epiphany scheme, so that, ironically, the decisive blow will be dealt by the very doctrine they deny: the bodily resurrection at the return of Christ.

Finally, Paul portrays the Holy Spirit as the one who both informs the church about the opponents and indicates and empowers individuals to battle against the opponents. According to Paul, “the Spirit clearly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by being devoted to seductive spirits and demonic doctrines” (1 Tim 4:1). I have argued that πνεῦμα here refers to the Holy Spirit. The prophetic role of the Spirit is reflected elsewhere in the NT (e.g., Acts 11:27-28; 21:11; Rev 2:7-3:22). We are not told how or where the Spirit conveyed the clear prophetic word Paul here has in mind, but the content of the prophecy has to do with the opponents. Theologically, this is significant. The false teachers are in accordance with prophecy; thus, the believers in

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123 The shift from the future to the present tense in the passages indicates that Paul is offering an eschatological reading of the present situation in Ephesus. See the full discussion and notes in chapters two and five.
124 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section three.
125 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section three.
Ephesus can know that the opponents do not have the upper hand—they have not caught God unawares.

Moreover, we read in 1 Tim 1:18: “This charge I entrust to you, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies (προφητεία) previously made about you, in order that by them you might serve as a soldier in the good war.” This is the first of two clear references in 1 Timothy to prophecies concerning the delegate. In 1 Tim 4:14, Paul mentions gifting (χάρισμα), prophecies (προφητεία), and the laying on of hands (ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν). In 2 Tim 1:6, Paul again speaks of gifting (τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ) and the laying on of hands, and he follows this with a reference to the empowering Spirit (v. 7). Though the term προφητεία does not occur in this text, I have suggested that we should understand this as a reference to the same event mentioned in 1 Tim 1:18 and 1 Tim 4:14—Timothy’s commissioning. The “prophecies” of 1 Tim 1:18, then, are specifically words concerning the divine will for Timothy that are understood to have originated with the Holy Spirit himself. The same Spirit who indicated Timothy for ministry has gifted the delegate for the difficult work he must do.

4. Satan’s Stint as Instructor of the Opponents

In 1 Tim 1:20, Paul writes of Hymenaeus and Alexander, two false teachers whom he “delivered over to Satan in order that they might be instructed not to blaspheme.” Most likely, Paul here refers to excommunication, and he thinks of Satan as the principal adversary of God who nevertheless plays the part of an ally in the process of ecclesial discipline. This conception of Satan probably is based on Paul’s reading of the prologue to Job. For Satan to have full access to Hymenaeus and Alexander, they must be returned to the sphere where he holds sway, the world. Once they have been “delivered” (παραδίδωμι) to Satan, they will be “instructed” (παιδεύω). In 1 and 2 Timothy, only two characters are referred to as “instructors” of the opponents: Satan (1 Tim 1:20) and Timothy (2 Tim 2:25). Satan is pictured here as a pedagogue who functions alongside the delegate in the task of correcting false teachers. Paul says nothing in 1 Tim 1:20 about how Satan exercises his educative influence. Paul also is silent on Satan’s intentions, though we may presume that what Satan does to Hymenaeus and Alexander he hopes will be to their detriment. But Paul’s projection clearly is positive: he hopes that, by placing

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127 In my discussion of 2 Tim 3:5a (chapter five), I have argued that πνεῦμα in 2 Tim 1:7 refers to the Holy Spirit.
128 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section two.
129 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section two.
these two men outside the church and into the hands of Satan, they will become *former blasphemers*, like Paul himself (1 Tim 1:13). Whatever Satan believes he is doing, Paul sees him functioning as God’s disciplinary rod, applied to the backs not of schoolboys but of false teachers who will not otherwise stop promulgating doctrine that is insulting to God.\(^\text{130}\)

This depiction of Satan is noteworthy. Not only do *the opponents* fit within Paul’s theological framework—they are in accordance with prophecy (as discussed above)—but also *the principal adversary himself* falls under God’s dominion. As Calvin writes: “Because with the bridle of his power God holds [Satan] bound and restrained, he carries out only those things which have been divinely permitted to him.”\(^\text{131}\) The very one who has captured the opponents to do his will (2 Tim 2:26) ultimately is bound by God, which means that he and his incarcerated underlings cannot possibly prevail in Ephesus.

5. The Unstoppable Gospel and the Opponents

We have seen Paul emphasize the eventual downfall of the false teachers (e.g., 2 Tim 3:8-9). In 2 Tim 2:9-10, he invigorates Timothy by stressing the other side of this coin: the advancement of the gospel.\(^\text{132}\) Having briefly articulated his gospel (v. 8), Paul proceeds to explain the afflictions he endures in gospel ministry: he suffers “to the point of chains, as a criminal” (v. 9a). Unlike its instruments, however, the gospel cannot be incarcerated: “the word of God has not been chained” (v. 9b). Paul expresses his absolute confidence that, even when messengers of the gospel experience setbacks, the message itself will indeed move to its fulfillment. The salvation already accomplished by Christ (v. 8) will be fully attained by all of God’s true people (v. 10), and this certainty makes enduring the difficulties of ministry worthwhile. By speaking of endurance, Paul subtly combats the opponents’ eschatological misconception: *beyond endurance awaits the eschatological reward*. Additionally, by picturing the word of God as an unstoppable force, Paul strengthens his delegate for the fight against the false teachers. Timothy can minister with the knowledge that the “empty talkers” in Ephesus cannot derail God’s saving word.

6. Summary of Paul’s Engagement with the Opponents

I hope to have demonstrated that Paul engages with the false teachers in significant ways throughout the discourse. As many scholars have pointed out, the brief

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\(^{130}\) Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 158.

\(^{131}\) *Inst.* 1.14.17.

\(^{132}\) See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section four.
clash of swords we find in 1 and 2 Timothy does not match the *extensive engagement* we find in Galatians, for example, but this is perhaps because Paul knew the delegate could do much of his own fencing. In the opening chapter, I endeavored to show that 1 and 2 Timothy were not written directly to the congregation in Ephesus but to one of Paul’s lieutenants who had been stationed in the city.  

Paul elsewhere speaks of this lieutenant as one who was well versed in his ways (1 Cor 4:17), so more vigorous theological argumentation may have in the case of 1 and 2 Timothy been superfluous. What we find in these letters, I suggest, is Paul “cutting to the chase” in a series of abridged movements. Such a technique is appropriate for apostle-to-delegate correspondence.

Through various maneuvers, Paul makes three main points about the opponents. First, the false teachers are insurgents who resist God’s way of ordering the world. According to Paul, the opponents do not use the law according to the divine design. Furthermore, Paul pictures the opponents as deceivers who disregard the order established at creation and as ingrates who discard foods created and set apart by God himself. Their greed indicates that they have strayed from the God-ordained path of eschatological existence, the path of godliness. A necessary component of godliness is good works, and yet, the false teachers dismiss God-pleasing works like motherhood.

Their resurrection teaching is expressly in contrast to God the Savior’s scheme. The God who raised Christ from the dead will certainly resurrect believers who persevere on the path of godliness to participate in Christ’s eternal reign.

Second, the false teachers cannot ultimately thwart God’s plan. Paul explains that the opponents in Ephesus are according to prophecy, so they have not caught God unawares. Paul also strategically locates the opponents in Ephesus in the panorama of the great end-time conflict, the conflict demarcated by the advents of Christ. The very opponents who say there is no future resurrection exist between the bodily resurrection of Christ and the bodily resurrection of those who belong to Christ, which will take place when Christ Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead. Enclosed within the epiphany scheme, the insurgents’ demise is certain. Even Satan, the one who has captured the opponents to do his will, ultimately answers to God, which further evidences the fact that the incarcerated underlings cannot prevail. As the opponents of old were no match for the power of God, so the current culprits in Ephesus eventually will be seen for what they truly are, purveyors of a powerless message. In contrast to the opponents’ group and their

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133 See the discussion of genre in chapter one.
message is the true community of the Lord and the apostolic gospel. The true church, Paul declares, is certain to stand firm, and the gospel is a powerful force that will indeed move to its fulfillment. All of God’s true people will obtain eschatological salvation.

Third, the false teachers are not irredeemable. As the Great Architect of the redemptive arrangement, the Father gifts repentance to whomever he wills. God can bring even the most hostile and unteachable opponent to a knowledge of the truth. Indeed, this seems to be the purpose of excommunication in 1 and 2 Timothy: that by placing the unteachable opponent into the hands of Satan, here portrayed as God’s schoolmaster, the opponent might learn not to blaspheme. Paul consistently holds out hope that some of the false teachers will “name the name of the Lord” and depart from their fellow insurgents, thereby showing themselves to be part of the true church.

B. Ministerial Directives: How Timothy and the Wider Community Are to Respond to the Opponents

The aforementioned convictions undergird Paul’s ministerial directives. Though they are enemies of God, the opponents’ are not beyond the reach of God’s grace; thus, the delegate is to minister the saving word to them. In the explicit and implicit units, Paul calls Timothy to occupy himself with five specific activities: reflection on his commissioning and on the apostolic gospel, rejection of the opponents’ claims, proclamation of the healthy teaching, demonstration of the gospel in actions that are pleasing to God, and correction of the insurgents. The wider community is at least implicitly included in the activities of rejection, demonstration, and correction (excommunication).

1. Reflection on Commissioning and Recognized Content

Reflection is an important aspect of the delegate’s assignment; Timothy is to reflect on both a particular occurrence and familiar material. First, in 1 Tim 1:18, Paul encourages the delegate in his present task by reminding him of a significant past event, his commissioning. It is by recalling the divine words that set him apart as a soldier that Timothy will be encouraged in the good war. Second, ongoing reflection on the good teaching is implicit in Paul’s comments in 1 Tim 4:6. The good servant has set his mind (παρακολουθέω) on the words of the faith, and he must continue to feed (ἐντρέφω) on

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134 I have discussed 1 Tim 1:18 above; see the subsection “The Activity of the Triune God with Respect to the Opponents.”
135 The verb παρακολουθέω here has the sense of following with the mind.
Third, persistent and formative reflection on the apostolic gospel is explicit in 2 Tim 2:8. One does not master and subsequently move on from the gospel; on the contrary, Timothy is to return again and again (μνημονεύω) to the unchanging content of “Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David.” Such contemplative attention will both protect the delegate from shipwreck and enable him to perceive with great clarity any adjustments to this stable material the opponents are attempting to make.

2. Repudiation of the False Teaching

The negative counterpart to this call for reflection is the command for Timothy to reject the false teaching. On numerous occasions, Paul urges Timothy to distance himself from the doctrine of the opponents. He is to “reject (παραίτεομαι) those myths that are godless and characteristic of the gullible” (1 Tim 4:7), “turn away (ἐκτρέπω) from the profane empty sounds and contradictions falsely called knowledge” (1 Tim 6:20), “avoid (περιστήμη) the profane empty sounds” (2 Tim 2:16), and “refuse to take part in (παραίτεομαι) foolish and uninstructed debates” (2 Tim 2:23). Moreover, the delegate is to ensure that others do not involve themselves in the opponents’ disputes (2 Tim 2:14). Viewed alongside other orders given to the delegate (discussed below), it is clear that in these texts Paul is thinking of the importance of maintaining a safe distance from the doctrinal altercations of the opponents, while at the same time showing concern for the salvation of the deviant ones. The solution was not to reason with the opponents, but to present the truth clearly and reliably.

3. Proclamation of the Healthy Teaching

In the oppositional units of the letters, Paul uses a variety of verbs to refer to Timothy’s didactic duties (e.g., ὑποτίθημι, 1 Tim 4:6; διδάσκω, 1 Tim 6:2b; παρακαλέω, 1 Tim 6:2b; φυλάσσω, 1 Tim 6:20; ὑπομιμήσκω, 2 Tim 2:14; ἀφθονίμεω, 2 Tim 2:15; ἔργον ποίησον εὐαγγελιστοῦ, 2 Tim 4:5). That the delegate’s ministry is primarily a preaching/teaching ministry is most clear in 2 Tim 4:2. In v. 2, Paul provides a series of

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136 See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section one.
137 Smith, Pauline Communities as “Scholastic Communities,” 359; Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 373.
138 See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section one.
139 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section five.
140 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
142 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section three.
imperatives that appear to establish a logical procedure. The first verb, κηρύσσω, is the rubric for Timothy’s ministry; he is to proclaim the apostolic gospel both to those within the Christian community and to those outside the faith. The next verb, ἐφίστημι, along with the adverbs εὐχαίρως and ἄκαίρως, indicates that the need for truth in Ephesus is so great that Timothy is to display a perpetual readiness to preach. The delegate’s method (κηρύσσω) and his message (λόγος) must remain constant. The final three verbs—ἐλέγχω, ἐπιτιμάω, and παρακάλεω—denote specific didactic activities. Timothy is to “confront” those within the community whose thinking and behavior is at odds with the apostolic gospel. After confronting community members, he is to “warn” them that their errors are not to be repeated. Finally, the delegate is to “exhort” or “encourage” these believers toward maturity in the faith. In his preaching/teaching ministry, Timothy is to make use of the full extent of scriptural and apostolic instruction at his disposal, and he must maintain an attitude of forbearance.

4. Visible Expression of the Gospel

As the delegate heralds the healthy teaching, he will achieve the goal of his ministry. According to 1 Tim 1:5, the end product of Timothy’s commission is ἀγάπη. The term ἀγάπη is used here to indicate the entire outward life that results from authentic faith.143 Thus, Paul’s point is that the visible expression of the apostolic gospel is to be the ultimate aim of Timothy’s work in Ephesus. In 1 Tim 4:7b, Paul calls Timothy himself to exercise “for the goal of godliness” (πρὸς εὐσεβείαν). Here, again, the objective is the display of the apostolic gospel in works that are acceptable to God.144 Similarly, in 2 Tim 2:22, Timothy is told to flee the headstrong passions associated with youthfulness and instead pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.145 Such virtues, Paul says, are the aim of “those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” It is those who have responded positively to the apostolic gospel, who have experienced the divine act of cleansing, who are rendered capable of pursuing God-pleasing virtues. In both 1 and 2 Timothy, it is lives transformed by the gospel that will be the best defense against the opponents’ impotent message.

5. Correction of the Deviant Ones

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143 See the full discussion and notes in chapter two, section one.
144 See the full discussion and notes in chapter four, section one.
145 See the full discussion and notes in chapter five, section one.
Paul begins the first letter by instructing Timothy to remain in Ephesus and “command (παραγγέλλω) certain people not to teach deviant doctrine” (1 Tim 1:3). This correcting activity is clarified in the second letter. In 2 Tim 2:24-25, Timothy is told to “instruct (παιδεύω) the opponents with meekness.” The delegate is to be characterized by gentleness, the posture most appropriate for one interfacing with aggressive opponents. Furthermore, he must be patient, waiting for the teaching he heralds to transform the hearers. But it is also clear that those who refuse to repent from destructive doctrine and conduct are to be corrected through exclusion from the Christian community. If a meek ministry of correction fails, an appropriately harsh severance must take place. Paul does not in 1 and 2 Timothy clarify precisely when excommunication should occur, but the emphasis in 2 Tim 2:24 on forbearance indicates that the pronouncement should not be issued with haste.

The practice of excommunication surfaces in both 1 Tim 1:20 and 2 Tim 3:5b.146 Fastened to the end of the vice list of 2 Tim 3:2-5 is the command, “Purposefully avoid these.” Timothy must keep away from the types of people highlighted in vv. 2-5a. Because usually Paul urges Timothy and the congregation to avoid the content/feuds of the opponents (discussed above), but not necessarily the opponents themselves, the command to avoid individuals in 2 Tim 3:5b probably indicates a disciplinary measure like the one described in 1 Tim 1:20. According to 1 Tim 1:20, when a person within the Christian community persists in opposing the apostolic gospel, he or she is to be handed over to Satan, which is to be removed from the sphere where the Spirit is at work (the church) and to be returned to the sphere where Satan holds sway (the world). But even this final disciplinary measure is taken, as I have tried to show above,147 with the hope that the deviant one will be rescued from the domain of darkness by “naming the name of the Lord.”148

6. Summary of the Procedure for Dealing with the Opponents

Timothy will find strength in the divine words that set him apart for the work of ministry, and he is to give contemplative attention to the fixed gospel message, thus ensuring that he will remain immovable in the face of competing claims. Rather than

146 See the full discussion and notes in chapters two and five.
147 See the subsection “Satan’s Stint as Instructor of the Opponents.”
148 Another aspect of correction in these letters is the limitation of women. The opponents occasioned, either directly or indirectly, the restrictions Paul places on women in 1 Tim 2:9, 11-12 and 1 Tim 5:11, 14. I have discussed these texts above; see the subsection “Success among Women in the Church.”
trying to reason with the disputatious false teachers, the delegate is to proclaim the truth perspicuously and persistently. His didactic duties include challenging those in the Christian community whose lives and teaching are incongruent with the apostolic gospel, cautioning them that their errors are not to be repeated, and exhorting them to godliness, for lives transformed by the apostolic gospel will be the best defense against the empty message in Ephesus. Promulgators of the empty message are to be met, first, with patient and gentle correction. Those who stubbornly continue in falsehood, however, are to be corrected through exclusion from the Christian community with the hope that they will come to a knowledge of truth. Blasphemers can become former blasphemers (1 Tim 1:13, 20). Captives can experience release (2 Tim 2:25-26).

**Conclusion**

The questions addressed in this study are: 1) “What doctrines and practices set the opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy apart from the faithful Christian community?” and 2) “How does/should the Christian community respond to the opponents?” Having in chapters two to five provided an extensive analysis of those units where we have certain or highly probable reference to the opponents, I have in this chapter sought to answer these questions as precisely as the letters allow. The aim of this investigation has been to benefit the church by clarifying her confession as well as her mission. I will therefore close the study by briefly considering a number of implications for the house of God today.
Conclusion

I. Reflections on Methodology

In this study, I have formulated a new approach to the study of opponents, one that remains rigorously tethered to the primary text. Additionally, I have perhaps for the first time brought work on theological interpretation of Scripture into dialogue with historical-critical studies of Paul’s opponents, arguing for a way of reading adversaries that I hope has allowed me to arrive at more secure findings that will be of especial benefit to the church. Theological interpretation of Scripture, as the reader will have observed, does not dispense with all the principles of the historical-critical method. Much of this investigation has been devoted to grammatical and syntactical concerns and word studies. As Webster astutely remarks, “Not all theological interpretation is immediately recognizable as such.”\(^1\) Theological interpretation does, however, resist seeing the methods of historical criticism as an end in themselves. Webster, again, writes: “Exegetical practices are subordinate to the nature of the text, and their end is attention to the text’s direction.”\(^2\)

Working from the presupposition that Holy Scripture is the instrument of Christ’s rule in his church, I have suggested that any study of this body of sanctified texts, even an investigation of the opponents reflected in NT letters, should commence and continue with an interest in hearing the word of the Lord for his people. For the theological interpreter, the ultimate aim of reading is fellowship and fitting participation, the incomparable good of knowledge of God and the gracious privilege of involvement in God’s redemptive arrangement. In Scripture, God reveals himself as Savior and summons his people to participate in the ongoing drama of redemption.\(^3\) The canonical script calls for ecclesial performance.

I have argued that the relevance of the polemical sections of Scripture becomes clear as we realize that, when reading these sections, we are not encountering “other people’s opponents.” The church today is in continuity with the communities addressed

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\(^2\) Ibid., 47, emphasis added.

\(^3\) Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 178–179.
by the authors of the NT; we are one body joined together by the Holy Spirit. Thus, boundaries raised for the Christian community in Ephesus are boundaries raised for the church today, and Paul’s way of handling the opponents in Ephesus should inform twenty-first-century believers in our interactions with those who are hostile to the gospel. *Even the polemical portions of the canonical script call for ecclesial performance.*

**II. Summary of the Findings**

In the previous chapter, I offered overall conclusions about the doctrines and practices of the opponents in Ephesus and about the way the faithful community was to engage these opponents. These findings may be summarized as follows.

I have concluded that the opponents came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus. At one time, they were viewed as being in good standing within the community, and so were considered to be insiders, though at the time of the writing of 1 and 2 Timothy Paul considered them to be spiritual outsiders. In Paul’s assessment, the opponents had rejected the apostolic gospel, and this rejection marked a “changing of sides.” When he composed the letters, Paul clearly viewed these former insiders as mentally and morally corrupt individuals, enemies of God and the faithful Christian community in Ephesus. I have argued that the opponents’ teaching is best described as an erroneous eschatological position that derived from the complexity of Paul’s views. The opponents immaterialized the resurrection, believed they had already experienced ἀνάστασις in full, and therefore thought they were living only in the age to come. Thus, they proscribed marriage and motherhood and they formulated some type of resurrection diet. Additionally, they laid claim to a special “knowledge,” probably the more complete knowledge Paul himself reserved for the age to come. With “eschatological eyes,” they offered innovative readings of the OT to support their resurrection teaching. I have concluded that the opponents received payment for their teaching. According to Paul, it was the opponents’ greed that initially led them to reject the apostolic gospel. Most likely, they set out to recruit as large a following, and as large an income, as possible. But the opponents discovered that their eschatological teaching had an especial appeal to women. Both women within the Pauline community and women outside the community fell prey to the opponents in Ephesus. As I have developed my view of the opponents, I have critiqued a number of the extant theories, including “Gnostic,” Jewish, and Proto-Montanist identifications.

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4 Ibid., 140.
With respect to the faithful community’s response to the conflict in Ephesus, I have argued that Paul engages the opponents in significant ways throughout the discourse. I have drawn attention to a number of literary and theological maneuvers that in my view are intended to counteract the opponents’ influence and/or to bolster the faithful community’s confidence as they struggle against the opponents. These include the way Paul turns features of the opponents against them, his use of the faithful saying formula, the way he relates the Triune God and the principal adversary, Satan, to the opponents, and the way he portrays the gospel as an unstoppable force in his own ministry. Though Paul pictures the opponents as enemies of God, he also highlights the fact that the opponents are not beyond the reach of God’s grace; thus, Timothy is called to minister the saving word to them. In the explicit and implicit units of the letters, Paul instructs Timothy to occupy himself with five specific activities: reflection on his commissioning and on the apostolic gospel, rejection of the opponents’ claims, proclamation of the healthy teaching, demonstration of the gospel in actions that are pleasing to God, and correction of the false teachers themselves. The wider faithful community is at least implicitly included in the activities of rejection, demonstration, and correction.

III. Implications for the House of God Today

In closing, I will enumerate what I perceive to be the most important implications of my findings for the house of God today.

First, a confessional imperative: congregations today must profess the message of “Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David” (2 Tim 2:8). This summary of the apostolic gospel, as I have attempted to show, is designed to invigorate eschatological hope in the face of an erroneous eschatological position, one that had no place for the future, bodily resurrection of those who belong to Christ. For Paul, the bodily resurrection of Christ and the bodily resurrection of believers are connected in such a way that the one cannot exist without the other. Without the bodily resurrection of Christ, there can be no bodily resurrection for believers. Because of the bodily resurrection of Christ, there will be a bodily resurrection for believers. Thus, eschatological hope is an integral part of the gospel message. For the one church, a clear line has been drawn. And so we confess, “We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

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5 Hays, First Corinthians, 262. In a way, the present work comes alongside the works of Wright and others who have attempted to clarify the genuine Christian hope. See especially Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God; idem, Surprised by Hope:
Second, a pastoral warning: the desire for wealth can lead one into the territory of false teaching. As I hope to have demonstrated, it was their reach for riches that carried the opposing group in Ephesus away from the apostolic faith, into the snare of the devil. Those who serve the church in their teaching and writing would do well to contemplate the connection we find in 1 and 2 Timothy between greed and destructive doctrine. Today, innovation and success go hand in hand, but originality must not infringe upon fidelity to the apostolic teaching.

Third, an ecclesiological reality: the faithful reside with foes. In the great house are mingled many instruments for dishonorable use, and so it will be until the master returns. Paul does not think of the adversaries in Ephesus as an anomaly; rather, as we have seen, he places them in a line of eschatological enemies that will continue until Christ appears to consummate his kingdom. Calvin’s comment is befitting: “No sooner is one error driven out than new ones immediately spring up to take its place.” Therefore, the church at present is not in a time of peace.

Fourth, then, a missional encouragement: though opposition is incessant, no enemy can thwart God’s saving word. By giving contemplative attention to the apostolic gospel, the church will be able to discern those contemporary figures and groups that seek to adjust the saving word. While all members of the Christian community are to stand firm as pillars of the truth, the church’s leaders shoulder the responsibility to ensure that those who distort the gospel do not go unaddressed. Faithful participation in God’s redemptive arrangement involves both proclamation of the apostolic gospel and appropriate engagement with those who attempt to tamper with the Savior’s scheme. False teachers are to be corrected gently, and when necessary, corrected through exclusion from the church. Always, these measures are remedial. The mind and heart of even the furious opponent can be penetrated by the powerful, saving word; by repentance, he or she may prove to be part of the true church, the firm foundation of God that surely will stand.

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6 Calvin, Comm. 2 Tim 3:9.
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