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# PAULUS SENEX

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Thomas Olbricht is known for his passionate interest in the history of the religious movement of which he is so much a part. The Restorationists of the nineteenth century are his intimate acquaintances, and so are the folks in the often small churches of his youth. They are woven into the seamless memory that is an essential part of who and what he is. Tom long occupied himself with that memory and now that he is about to attain his majority and have more time for reflection and writing, he will, more self-consciously, remember as he moves toward old age. It may not be inappropriate, then, if one similarly situated offers to our honoree some thoughts on old age. It will not surprise him that these reflections center on the NT and the moral teachings of the society in which it came into existence.

There is no need to document the current interest in aging and the aged; communications media of every sort deluge us with information and propaganda on the subject. Whereas twenty years ago there was clearly an emphasis on alerting us to the greying of America and, in a certain segment of the religious press, inculcating the churches for neglecting the elderly,<sup>1</sup> the situation now is otherwise. The growing political power of the elderly and organizations like the American Association of Retired Persons have been recognized by politicians and government on every level, and the aged and the phenomenon of aging are hot topics.

In view of this preoccupation with the elderly, one is struck by the fact that so little serious, extensive work on old age in the Bible has been done. Broadly conceived theological studies on the topic have been published,<sup>2</sup> and more focused studies on particular aspects—for example, on wisdom and old age—are beginning to appear,<sup>3</sup> but it is fair to say that the subject still awaits intensive and imaginative study. On the face of it, the NT evidence does not

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<sup>1</sup> A sounder response was *Toward a Theology of Aging* (ed. Seward Hiltner; Special Issue of *Pastoral Psychology* [New York: Human Sciences, 1975]). The topic became so popular that in 1984 a journal devoted to aging, *Journal of Religion and Aging*, began publication.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., J. Gordon Harris, *Biblical Perspectives on Aging: God and the Elderly* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Ulrich Förster, *Weisheit und Alter: Konzeptionen von Lebensklugheit in Antike und Gegenwart* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 11.536; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993).

encourage us to hope for much. Old men and women are mentioned in passing,<sup>4</sup> and elders of the church or the synagogue appear with some frequency,<sup>5</sup> but neither the phenomenon of old age itself nor the personal characteristics of particular old people interest the NT authors. Or so it seems.

I wish to suggest that the Pastoral Epistles portray their author as an old man. These three letters come from a period when the churches they have in view already had a history and were in need of stabilization, consolidation, and planning for the future that was now seen to stretch out ahead.<sup>6</sup> A literary device used to this end elsewhere in the NT is the farewell discourse. In such discourses the protagonist, as he anticipates his departure or death, recalls his life and presents himself as a model to be emulated, thereby ensuring that succeeding generations will have the means to take care of their needs by remembering him and adhering to the teaching and traditions received from him.<sup>7</sup> Taken together, these three letters may be seen as the consolidating instructions of an aged Paul represented in 2 Timothy as saying farewell.<sup>8</sup>

This picture of Paul as an old man emerges from the description of his circumstances, for the letters say nothing about his age. In Phlm 9, however, Paul calls himself a *πρεσβύτερος*, an old man, a word describing someone at least in his late fifties,<sup>9</sup> and on most readings the Pastoral Epistles were

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Luke 1:36; 2:36; John 3:4; 8:57; 21:18; Acts 4:22; 7:23; 1 Tim 5:2; 2 Tim 1:5; Titus 2:3.

<sup>5</sup> Jewish elders: Mark 7:3, 5; 8:31; 11:27. Christian elders: Acts 11:30; 14:23; cf. 15:2, 4-6; 1 Tim 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1. G. Bornkamm (*Presbys*," *TDNT* 6.651-83) focuses on the institutional aspect.

<sup>6</sup> For a sketch of this development, see Leonhard Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (SNTSMS 60; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> See Acts 20:18-35; 2 Pet 1:12-15. On farewell discourses, see J. Lambrecht, "Paul's Farewell Address at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38)," in *Les Actes de Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie* (ed. J. Kremer; Gebloux: J. Duculot [1978] 306-37) and Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, "The Literary Genre Testament," in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Robert A. Kraft & George W. Nickelsburg; Atlanta: Scholars Press [1986] 259-67).

<sup>8</sup> There has been a tendency to be overly precise in delineating the farewell speeches as a distinct genre. I do not think that 2 Tim can be compressed into such a "genre." For discussion of the problem, see Michael Prior, *Paul the Letter-Writer and the Second Letter to Timothy* (JSNTSS 28; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989) 91-112; Kenneth L. Cukrowski, "Pagan Polemic and Lukan Apologetic: The Function of Acts 20:17-38" (diss., Yale University, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> See Joachim Gnlika, *Der Philemonbrief* (HTKNT 10.4; Freiburg: Herder, 1982) 43. There was no agreement on when old age began, as there was not even on the precise divisions of the life span. For example, Cicero at one point (*On Old Age* 4) divides life into three periods, childhood, youth, old age, and at another (*On Old Age* 33) adds middle age to represent the more common four ages. On the subject, see E. Eyben, "Die Einteilung des menschlichen Lebens im römischen Altertum," *RhMus* 116(1973) 150-90. In *On the Creation* (105), Philo records a tradition that there are seven ages (the little boy, the boy, the lad, the young man, the man, the

written either by Paul some years after Philemon or by someone else representing Paul years later and writing just before his death. I think the latter is more probable. What interests us, however, is not what is said about him as an old man, but how what were conceived of as characteristics or viewpoints of old people are reflected in the Pastorals. Ceslaus Spicq has drawn attention to what he identifies as psychological characteristics of an old man in these letters,<sup>10</sup> and I wish to follow his lead.

### Ancient Discussions of Old Age

The portrayal of Paul as an old man in the Pastorals shares much with ancient opinions of the aged. By the end of the first century A.D. there was already a long literary tradition on old age representing widely differing attitudes.<sup>11</sup> Before Plato, there was a tendency to dwell on such negative aspects of old age as the diminution of faculties and physical pleasures and the ill treatment the aged receive from their family and friends. Even Socrates was reported to have preferred death to the disabilities of old age.<sup>12</sup> Plato's *Republic*, on the other hand, on which Cicero depended for part of his own discussion of old age, set forth an intensive moralizing of old age, which continued in the centuries that followed.

Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* represents the unflattering and pessimistic view. Because the aged have been deceived and made mistakes, he says (2.13.1389b), "and since most human things turn out badly, they are positive about nothing, and in everything they show an excessive lack of energy. Diffident, they see only the bad, are suspicious and minimalistic in their desires, and are cowardly and inclined to anticipate evil." Aristotle goes on (1390a) to charge that their bad experiences in life have left them little given to hope. Furthermore, since hope has to do with the future, of which so little remains for them, they incessantly talk about the past, taking pleasure in their

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elderly man, the old man) and that these ages are measured by multiples of seven though not in regular succession. According to this calculation, the span for an elderly man (πρεσβύτης) would be from fifty to fifty-six and that for an old man (γέρων) would begin thereafter. But he has a different division in *On Joseph* 127.

<sup>10</sup> Ceslaus Spicq, *Saint Paul: Les épîtres pastorales* (ÉB; 4th ed.; Paris: Gabalda, 1969) 1.147-53. The Fourth Gospel had been subjected to a similar but more extensive interpretation by Gerhard Hoffmann, (*Das Johannesevangelium als Alterswerk: Eine psychologische Untersuchung* [Gütersloh: Evangelischer Verlag "Der Rufer," 1933]).

<sup>11</sup> A convenient point of entry into this material is provided by J. G. F. Powell, *Cicero: Cato Maior De Senectute* (Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 28; Cambridge: University Press, 1988) 24-30, and his commentary throughout. The major philosophic sources that come under discussion are Plato, *Republic* 328D-330A; Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.13.1389b-1390a; Cicero, *Cato the Elder, On Old Age*; Seneca, *Epistles* 12, 26, 30, 58, 77; Plutarch, *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs*.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., Xenophon, *Apology* 6-8.

recollections. He also finds fault with their moralizing: "In their manner of life there is more calculation than moral character, for calculation is concerned with that which is useful, moral character with virtue."

Such negative statements were not uncommon, but they were frequently repeated only to be rejected by, among others, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch, who tended to offer what had become the traditional views on old age and its advantages.<sup>13</sup> It is this discussion of old age that has informed the depiction of Paul as an old man in the Pastoral Epistles.

### Generational Awareness in the Pastoral Epistles

The Pastoral Epistles are unique in the NT for their attention to the different generations within the churches of their acquaintance. They know a grandmother (Lois, 2 Tim 1:5) and specify the qualifications of a special order of widows, some of whom at least were likely to be grandmothers, who must be at least sixty years old (1 Tim 5:3-10). Other older women of unspecified age are also advised on their responsibilities (1 Tim 5:2; Titus 2:3-9). We don't hear of any grandfathers, but older men, whether elders (1 Tim 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; cf. 1 Tim 3:1-7) or not (Titus 2:1) are mentioned.

There are also younger men (1 Tim 5:1; Titus 2:6) and women (1 Tim 5:2; Titus 2:4). Among the latter, a particular group, young widows (1 Tim 5:11-15), is especially beset by problems. Children also are mentioned as cared for (1 Tim 3:4-5, 12; 5:10; cf. Titus 1:6), but they and grandchildren are in turn responsible for the support of their parents and grandparents (1 Tim 5:4).

The addressees of Paul the writer exemplify the letters' generational interest. Timothy has a grandmother and mother (2 Tim 1:5) who taught him the sacred writings from childhood (2 Tim 3:15). While Titus and Timothy both have considerable responsibilities in the church, the household of the living God (1 Tim 3:15),<sup>14</sup> they yet run the risk of being looked down upon (Titus 2:15) or having their youth despised (1 Tim 4:11-16), and they are warned to flee youthful lusts (2 Tim 2:22). They are also directed to treat their elders, whether men or women, with proper deference (1 Tim 5:1-2).

What is particularly striking in view of this real generational stratification is that the writer more frequently than in other letters ascribed to

<sup>13</sup> Cicero's *On Old Age* is the most systematic refutation of four major accusations: that old age withdraws us from active pursuits (15-20), makes the body weaker (27-38), deprives us of physical pleasures (39-66), and marks the nearness of death (66-83). In each case, the truthfulness of the complaint is either denied, or what is seen as a misfortune is discovered to be a boon.

<sup>14</sup> See D. C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (SBLDS 71; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

Paul refers to his addressees as his children (1 Tim 1:2, 18; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4), reserving this term for them and avoiding such terms as brother (e.g., 1 Thess 3:2) or fellow worker (e.g., Rom 16:21) which are applied elsewhere to Timothy and others. The point is that the Pastorals know of generations of Christians before the young leaders they address and anticipate further generations to come after them (cf. 2 Tim 2:2). The incongruity of which the author is aware is that his addressees, who are so important for the future of the church, are young and liable not to escape easily the criticisms of youth.<sup>15</sup> That itself invites further attention, but for our present purposes it suffices to turn to the picture of the old man who is concerned about the future of the church.

### The Old Paul Speaks

At first glance, Paul evinces the pessimism which Aristotle attributes to old men. Looking ahead he sees, in Fichte's words, "the age of perfected sinfulness" (1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-9; 4:3-4). No wonder he appears, as critics of the aged said, to be one of those old men who are "morose, troubled, fretful, and hard to please." One can understand, if not entirely excuse them for this, Cicero says, on the ground that "old men imagine themselves ignored, despised, and mocked at."<sup>16</sup> This is the Paul of the Pastorals, who has been abandoned by people as far away as Asia (2 Tim 1:15; cf. 4:10, 14-16) and is deeply aware of the shame that they may associate with him and the cause he represents (2 Tim 1:16; cf. 1:8, 12; 2:15).

Paul has finished his race and now is prepared to face death (2 Tim 4:6-7). It is natural to use the metaphor of an athletic contest in connection with an old person. Plutarch, for example, begins his *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs* (783B) with the metaphor and uses it throughout. He rejects the excuse that old age absolves one from joining in the contest of life. More usual, however, is the use of the metaphor to describe completion of the contest of life as the old man now looks death in the face.<sup>17</sup> Of such an old man Seneca says, "But this old man had the greatest weight with me when he discussed death and death was near. . . . But an end that is near at hand, and is bound to come, calls for tenacious courage of soul; this is a rarer thing, and

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<sup>15</sup> It is perhaps not as incongruous as might appear at first glance. For the tradition of advice to young rulers, see Benjamin Fiore, S.J., *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (AnB 105; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1986). Christopher Hutson is writing a dissertation at Yale, "My True Child: The Rhetoric of Youth in the Pastoral Epistles," in which he treats some of these concerns.

<sup>16</sup> Cicero, *On Old Age* 65.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Cicero, *On Old Age* 83; Seneca, *Epistle* 30.13.

none but the wise man can manifest it."<sup>18</sup> Paul does what is expected of an old man, but there is very little in him of Seneca's Stoic wise man. He will indeed receive a crown of victory for his efforts (2 Tim 4:8), but from the Lord who empowered him in his ministry.<sup>19</sup> This alerts us to the fact that, while the Pastoral Epistles use current conventions in their representation of an old man, it is a Christian old man who depends on God.

Aristotle's criticism that old people indulge in reminiscence is true to life and was remarked upon by the ancients. According to Cicero, "It is most delightful to have the consciousness of a life well spent and the memory of many deeds well performed."<sup>20</sup> Such satisfaction is also found in the Pastorals, where Paul's life is to be remembered and followed (2 Tim 3:10-14). On the surface, it might appear as if it is again the paradigm of the ideal Stoic that is foisted on Paul. The reality is quite different, however, for the old Paul remembers that it was through divine grace and mercy that he had become the example of sinners who would believe and receive eternal life through Christ's perfect patience (1 Tim 1:12-17).

A frequent complaint against old age was that it made the body weaker.<sup>21</sup> Cicero admits the truth of the complaint, to a degree, but claims that even in old age one can preserve some vigor through exercise and just the right amount of food and drink.<sup>22</sup> Philosophers were restrained, however, in their praise of physical exercise and insisted that of greater importance, particularly to old people, was exercise of mind and soul.<sup>23</sup> The Pastorals share a similar evaluation of bodily training (σωματική γυμνασία, 1 Tim 4:8), but, in the philosopher's understanding, the training it encourages is not that which leads to a sounder mind. Rather, it is that which has godliness (εὐσέβεια) as its goal.<sup>24</sup> It is the appearance and instruction of God's grace

<sup>18</sup> Seneca, *Epistle* 30.8.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Tim 4:8, 17; cf. 1 Tim 1:12. The Lord grants him power (2 Tim 1:7), furnishes him with what he needs (1 Tim 6:17), and guards what has been entrusted to him (2 Tim 1:12).

<sup>20</sup> Cicero, *On Old Age* 9; cf. 14, 21-24 (the elderly do not lose their memories, cf. 71).

<sup>21</sup> See Cicero, *On Old Age* 15, 27-38, and Powell's commentary.

<sup>22</sup> Cicero, *On Old Age* 34, 36; cf. Plutarch, *Old Man in Public Affairs* 793B.

<sup>23</sup> For a variety of viewpoints: Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.4: Enough exercise is to be taken to benefit the soul (cf. Pseudo Isocrates, *To Demonicus* 9); the superior exercise of mind and soul: Plato, *Republic* 498B; Seneca, *Epistles* 15.5; 80.2-3; Pliny, *Epistle* 3.1; Plutarch, *Old Man in Public Affairs* 788B.

<sup>24</sup> The writer evidently has in mind persons of a rigorously ascetic sort, whose regimen included abstinence from marriage, and certain food and drink (1 Tim 4:3; 1 Tim 5:23). There was a certain type of Cynic who fit this description; see Pseudo Diogenes, *Epistle* 47, against marriage; see Pseudo Crates, *Epistle*; Pseudo Socrates, *Epistle* 9:3 on drinking cold water only. On 1 Tim 4:7-10, see Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* (NovTSup 16; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967) 171-77. See also 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 2:5, for the author's partiality for the metaphor.



that enable the believer to renounce the ungodly life for the godly and await redemption (Titus 2:11-14).

In a society in which there must not have been many old people,<sup>25</sup> it was taken for granted by many that old men would give advice. Plutarch demands of them

counsel, foresight, and speech—not such speech as makes a roar and clamour among people, but that which contains good sense, prudent thought, and conservatism; and in these the hoary hair and the wrinkles that people make fun of appear as witnesses to a man's experience and strengthen him by the aid of persuasion and the reputation for character. For youth is meant to obey and old age to rule . . . (*Old Men in Public Affairs* 789DE).

If old men in general could have such positive influence, how much more one's father? Consequently, the figure of a father guiding his son morally became archetypical for a special type of exhortation, paraenesis, that has stretched from Pseudo Isocrates' *Demonicus*, through Shakespeare's Polonius, to Kipling's "If."<sup>26</sup>

The Pastoral Epistles belong to this tradition of exhortation. Although Paul never calls himself their father in these letters (contrast 1 Cor 4:15; 1 Thess 2:11), he gives advice to his sons in the faith on a wide range of topics in a style developed by moral philosophers. At the center of his concern are life in the church and the life of the church in the larger society. In specifying what behavior is required, he adopts a particular kind of paraenesis, that of the παραγγέλματα, "precepts" or "advice," devoted to a particular topic.<sup>27</sup> For Paul, that topic is conduct in the household of the living God (1 Tim 3:15). He writes vigorously, even with some asperity, making liberal use of means of persuasion that had come to him from the

<sup>25</sup> Peter Brown (*The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1988] 6) estimates that in the second century A.D. the average life expectancy was twenty-five years and that only four out of every hundred men, and fewer women, lived to be fifty.

<sup>26</sup> On paraenesis, see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Library of Early Christianity 4; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 124-29; idem, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (ed. W. Haase & H. Temporini; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992) 2.26.278-87.

<sup>27</sup> Παραγγελία and παραγγέλλω are used frequently in 1 Timothy (1:3, 5, 18; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13, 17) but not in the other two letters. There are differences among the three letters, but the similarities outweigh them. The RSV translates the word by "charge" or "command," which stresses the peremptory quality of the advice. That Paul does sometimes mean "command" is true, but on occasion "precept" fits the context equally well, if not better. For examples of such advice on particular topics, see Plutarch's Γαμικὰ Παραγγέλματα (*Advice to Bride and Groom*) and Πολιτικά Παραγγέλματα (*Precepts of Statecraft*). Although παράγγελμα is the more common word, παραγγελία is also used, for example, by Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1104a7. For the view that it is by their precepts that old men lead the young to virtue, see Cicero, *On Old Age* 26; *De Officiis* 1.122-23.

philosophers of his own day.<sup>28</sup> He knows the conventions of such discourse, but with an assertiveness uncharacteristic of most of his contemporaries, he is not constrained by them. An example of the freedom with which he adapts what he has received is found in his advice to Timothy to speak "in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2), thus flying in the face of an axiom that a responsible speaker would be careful to determine the right time and season for his speech and never speak inappropriately, that is, "out of season." For this Paul, there is an urgency that brooks no reticence.<sup>29</sup>

Aristotle knew that the old are regarded as self-controlled (σωφρονικοί, *Rhetoric* 2.1389a13-14), but, rather than consider their self-control a virtue, he attributed it to calculation. The old, he insisted, are at best self-controlled and cowardly (σώφρονες καὶ δειλοί, *Rhetoric* 2.1390b3). But Cicero knew old men who were self-controlled and moderate in their lives, and it is no accident that he began his treatise on old age by complimenting his reader for his *moderatio animi*.<sup>30</sup>

Paulus Senex is, if nothing else, the apostle of moderation. How important this quality is for him appears from Titus 2:1-10, where σωφροσύνη and its cognates are used four times in the description of the qualities Titus should inculcate in the Christian community.<sup>31</sup> Such moral decency or self-control, thought of in that society as reasoned behavior, is part of a series of similar qualities that contribute to a picture of moderation and decorum in daily life, even, perhaps especially, when the church is at worship (1 Tim 2:8-15).<sup>32</sup> Above all else, the virtues in these letters are social in nature and are not new. One can perhaps understand why someone as critical as Aristotle could ascribe such an ethic to temerity; Paul, however, will have none of that. Almost as though he were answering such a charge, he claims that "God did not give us a spirit of timidity (δειλία) but a spirit of power and love and self-control (σωφροσύνη) (2 Tim 1:7). And, once again, it is God's saving grace that trains (παιδεύουσα) us to live with moderation, justice, and godliness (σωφρόνως καὶ δικαίως καὶ εὐσεβῶς) (Titus 2:12).

<sup>28</sup> See Spicq, *Les épîtres pastorales*, 1.151, for an interpretation of Paul's vigorous intellectual engagement as that of an old man.

<sup>29</sup> See Abraham J. Malherbe, "'In Season and Out of Season': 2 Timothy 4:2," in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) 137-45. For a similar modification of tradition, see "Medical Imagery in the Pastoral Epistles," *idem*, 121-36.

<sup>30</sup> Cicero, *On Old Age* 1; cf. 7, 33. *Moderatio* is Cicero's word for σωφροσύνη.

<sup>31</sup> According to the RSV, v. 2, "sensible"; v. 4, "to train"; v. 5, "sensible"; v. 6, "to control themselves." See also 1 Tim 2:9, 15; 3:2; Titus 1:8.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., the following, with their cognates: κοσμέω 1 Tim 2:9; 3:2; Titus 2:10; σεμνός, 1 Tim 2:2; 3:4, 8, 11; Titus 2:2, 7; ἡσυχία, 1 Tim 2:2, 11, 12. For the social side, see P. A. van Stempvoort, "Decorum, Orde en Mondigheid in het Nieuwe Testament," Inaugural Address, Groningen (Nijkerk: G. F. Hallenbach, 1956) esp. 8-10.

Plutarch knew that the aged man can easily succumb to idleness, cowardice (*δειλία*), and softness when he becomes domestic,<sup>33</sup> hence his advice that old men engage in public affairs and instill "good sense, prudent thought, and conservatism" in the young (*Old Men in Public Service* 789D). The conservatism of the aged is not only to hold on to the past, but to transmit what is of value to the future. They are like a farmer, Cicero says, who being asked for whom he is planting, will reply, "For the immortal gods, who have willed not only that I should receive these blessings from my ancestors, but also that I should hand them on to posterity."<sup>34</sup>

The author of the Pastorals is similarly conservative. He places a premium on what he has been entrusted with, which is what he has handed on to Timothy, and what Timothy is to hand on to others, who will in turn hand it on to still others.<sup>35</sup> The operative word in this transmission is "guard": Timothy is to guard the tradition that he receives from Paul, but to do so in the confidence that God is able to guard the deposit until that Day (2 Tim 1:12-14). Here there is no room for novelty.

The author's social conservatism is revealed in his attitude toward the state and relations with the larger society. Christians are to pray for representatives of the state so that they may live quiet, peaceable, and godly lives (1 Tim 2:1-3). The letters are also shot through with directions on Christians' social relations. Not only does the reaction of outsiders serve as motivation for the conduct of the community (Titus 2:5, 8, 10), or are Christians to conduct themselves in ways deemed appropriate by unbelievers (1 Tim 2:9-10; 5:8), but most surprising of all is that a good reputation among pagans is one of the requirements for church office (1 Tim 5:7).

Nowhere is the author's conservatism as evident as in his efforts to strengthen the Christian families in the churches for which he writes. His preoccupation with the household, however, is not due solely to an innate social conservatism; there were good practical reasons for his concern. False teachers forbade marriage (1 Tim 4:3) and, more disruptive, used households, apparently especially those with tractable women in them, as bases for their operation, in the process subverting entire families (2 Tim 3:6-7; Titus 1:11). It is noteworthy that the author does not deal with divorce, as Paul does in 1 Cor 7, but that the specific problems he addresses have to do with the social roles of two kinds of women, the culturally emancipated and widows.

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<sup>33</sup> *Old Man in Public Affairs* 784A; cf. 785D, 788F; 792B.

<sup>34</sup> Cicero, *On Old Age* 25.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Tim 1:18; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:1-2. Of greatest personal importance to Timothy would be what he had learned from childhood (2 Tim 3:14-15).

The author complains of intellectually emancipated women who are forever learning and who open their doors to purveyors of falsehood (2 Tim 3:6-8). Educated women, at least in the Roman upper class, were not unknown,<sup>36</sup> and a strong case for the philosophic education of women was made by moral philosophers like Musonius Rufus.<sup>37</sup> Juvenal, misogynistic and ever satirical, testifies of such educated women in Roman society, which appears to have troubled not a few.<sup>38</sup> The conservative response is represented by Plutarch, whose work *Advice to Bride and Groom* encourages the young bride to study philosophy as an antidote to quackery, but to learn it from her husband, her "guide, philosopher, and teacher in all that is lovely and divine" (145C) and to shut the door against all preachers of divinities other than her husband (140D). The instructions in 2 Tim 3:6-8 and 1 Tim 2:11-12 are not totally dissimilar.<sup>39</sup>

In 1 Cor 7:8-9 Paul expresses his preference that widows remain single; only if they lack self-control are they to marry. In 1 Tim 5:11-15, young widows are advised to marry, for that is what they want to do anyway. Perhaps more important is their social behavior if they are not married and neglect their domestic responsibilities. "They learn to be idlers, gadding about from house to house, and not only idlers but gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not." The solution is that they "marry, bear children, govern their households, and give the enemy no occasion to revile" them.

The directive that young widows marry would have satisfied Augustus' requirement that widows under the age of fifty marry within two years of their husbands' deaths. The traditional ideal, however, that a widow remain unmarried, continued to be held and is reflected in the qualification of a special class of widow, the "real widow," in 1 Tim 5:9, who must have had only one husband.<sup>40</sup> Such widows were entered on the church's rolls, evidently to perform particular functions (1 Tim 5:3-10).<sup>41</sup> What qualifies the "real widow," other than that she must be at least sixty years old, is that she has been exemplary in performing the traditional domestic duties expected of a woman and that she has no family able to care for her. That the latter was a

<sup>36</sup> See Beryl Rawson, "The Roman Family," in *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (ed. Beryl Rawson; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986) 40.

<sup>37</sup> See Fragment III, *That Women Too Should Study Philosophy*, and Fragment IV, *Should Daughters Receive the Same Education as Sons?*, in Cora F. Lutz, *Musonius Rufus, "The Roman Socrates"* (*Yale Classical Studies* 10; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947).

<sup>38</sup> Juvenal, *Satire* 6.398-456; cf. Martial 11.90.

<sup>39</sup> Also compare 1 Tim 2:9-10 with *Advice to Bride and Groom* 145EF.

<sup>40</sup> Rawson, "The Roman Family," 31-32.

<sup>41</sup> See Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Woman's Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

responsibility recognized far and wide in ancient society is recognized by the author.<sup>42</sup>

The value the author attaches to the traditional virtues is also clear from his discussion of bishops and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). What were lists of virtues generally to be developed have become qualifications for particular offices,<sup>43</sup> and it is noteworthy that, as in the case of the widows, bishops and deacons must also have been married only once and fulfilled their domestic responsibilities. The notion that successful household management was indispensable in the preparation for public service was commonly held and was part of the conservative social philosophy of persons like Plutarch.<sup>44</sup> The old Paul consistently instructs his younger readers in an ethic that is tried and true.

### Conclusion

I have only touched the subject, as the ancients would say, "with the tip of my finger." Space does not allow fuller exploration of what has been touched upon or doing more than merely mentioning some other features of these letters, for example, an aged man's appreciation for the importance of the institutional dimension of the church, the picture of young people that emerges from the letters, and their responsibilities and attitudes toward the elderly. It is quite clear that the author is reflecting on the relationship among the different generations in the churches and that he has Paul represent the attitudes of an old man.

In this depiction of Paul, the author makes use of conventional elements from the discussions of old age, but he always does so from a perspective determined by God's saving act in Christ and his empowering of the church's leaders. The old Paul of these letters may be at the point of death, but he is still vigorously involved in the affairs of his community.

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<sup>42</sup> See Theophrastus, *Characters* 6; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.2.1-6; Philo, *On the Decalogue* 113-18; Plutarch, *On Affection for Offspring* 495A-C.

<sup>43</sup> See John T. Fitzgerald, "Virtue/Vice Lists," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6.857-59. According to Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 50-51, these lists came from a convention in which the virtues had come to describe duties, as of military leaders.

<sup>44</sup> For the first and second centuries A.D., see Philo, *On Joseph* 38; Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 19.3; *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 70C; *Advice to Bride and Groom* 144BC; *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* 155D; *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* 189E. The notion is part of the larger discussion of the household as the beginning or source of the constitution. See David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS 26; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), esp. 21-59, and idem, "Household Codes," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (ed. David E. Aune; SBLBS 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 25-50.