



1 and 2 Timothy

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Introduction

As discussed in [another entry](#), the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and [Titus](#)) are letters found in the New Testament which claim the apostle Paul as their author, though they are typically understood in scholarship to be pseudonymous compositions which develop Pauline theology for a new audience. This entry and the one on [Titus](#) will look at each of the Pastoral Epistles individually, which is a different approach from most scholarship on the Pastoral Epistles. Most scholars treat the Pastoral Epistles as a unified corpus—almost as if they were a single document. By looking at the Pastoral Epistles individually, this entry and the one on [Titus](#) will show that while all three of the Pastoral Epistles contain elements of apocalypticism, they do so in different ways. All three, however, differ from the undisputed Pauline letters. The elements of apocalypticism that this entry will discuss are: the eschatological coming of Christ; divine revelation; presence of divine beings; and a two-age periodisation of history. This entry will focus on the texts of 1 and 2 Timothy and note the aspects of apocalypticism and retreats from Pauline apocalypticism found therein.

1 Timothy

In examining 1 Timothy, the first eschatological message comes in 1 Timothy 4:1–6, which begins: 'Now, the spirit expressly says that in the latter times, some will fall away from the faith by holding fast to lying spirits and teachings of demons' (1 Timothy 4:1). The author invokes a message from the spirit, a rarity in the Pastoral Epistles, that heresies will arise that will cause some to fall from the faith. Many interpret this passage as the author speaking of his present as part of eschatological time (Towner 2006, 289; Harding 2017, 265). It is notable that the author invokes supernatural beings (Downs 2005, 658), i.e., spirits and demons, which, as noted above, are a feature of apocalyptic discourse of the time. However, unlike what was seen in Pauline eschatology, there is no *imminent* expectation of Christ's return (Harding 2017, 265). The lack of imminence comes more to the fore in the next eschatological passage in 1 Timothy.

First Timothy 6:14–15 tells 'Timothy' to keep the commandment (see Marshall and Towner 1999, 644 for a discussion on this commandment) 'until the appearing of our lord Jesus Christ, which he will reveal in his own time.' The appearing (*epiphaneia*/ἐπιφάνεια, to be discussed further, below) refers to the

eschatological appearing of Jesus (Brox 1989, 217; Collins 2002, 165). Rather than present Christ's appearing as imminent, as seen in the undisputed Paulines, 1 Timothy 6:15 diminishes the expectation by noting that Christ will return in his own time (Brox 1989, 218; Collins 2002, 165). The belief in the return of Jesus Christ is important in 1 Timothy, but the timing has changed. Thus, the author has adopted and altered this aspect of Pauline apocalypticism.

Epiphany

Scholars have long noted that the Pastoral Epistles use distinct terminology for the eschatological appearing of Jesus Christ (Harrison 1921; Lührmann 1971; Oberlinner 1980; Lau 1996; Bassler 2002; Mitchell 2004). Rather than the typical Pauline *parousia*/παρουσία, the author of the Pastoral Epistles prefers *epiphaneia*/*epiphainō* (ἐπιφάνεια/ἐπιφαίνω). Thus, rather than describing the future event that is awaited as a 'coming' (*parousia*/παρουσία), the Pastoral Epistles describe this event as an 'appearing' (*epiphaneia*/ἐπιφάνεια). The epiphanic terminology is commonly used to denote the intervention of gods in human affairs (Lührmann 1971, 185-99; Lau 1996, 182-89, 221-25; Bassler 2002, 314). The overlap of use of these terms between Greco-Roman deities (especially the Roman emperor) in other writings of the period and Christ in the Pastoral Epistles has led a number of scholars to say that the author of the Pastoral Epistles is borrowing the epiphanic terminology from the widespread worship of the Roman emperor (Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972, 100-104; Cuss 1974, 143; Young 1994, 65; Hurtado 2003, 517-18; Trebilco 2004, 355-58, 379-80; Aageson 2008, 133; Maier 2013, 158).

The terminological shift is more than a mere change of designation. The use of *epiphaneia*/*epiphainō* allows the author of the Pastoral Epistles to cover both the past and the future appearing of Christ in the world with the same terminology (Oberlinner 1980, 200-201). The linkage of the two events through this epiphanic terminology is most evident in Titus 2:11, 14. In verse 11, the author uses a past tense form of *epiphainō*/ἐπιφαίνω to denote the Christ event, and in verse 13 (part of the same sentence in Greek) the author uses a form of *epiphaneia*/ἐπιφάνεια to describe the future coming of Christ (for verse 11, see Towner 1989, 745; Marshall and Towner 1999, 166; Oberlinner 1996, 128; for verse 13, see Brox 1989, 299-302; Collins 2002, 348). Thus, the epiphanic language of the Pastoral Epistles still retains the eschatological elements of the Pauline *parousia*/παρουσία while allowing the author flexibility to link his eschatology with other elements of his theology.

1 Timothy and Revelation

As noted above, an element present in Pauline apocalypticism is his emphasis on divine revelation, particularly of mysteries. In 1 Timothy 3:16, the author discusses a mystery (*mystērion*/μυστήριον). In giving the content of this mystery, the author cites what many scholars consider an ancient creedal formula or hymn: 'who was revealed in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared to angels, was preached among the nations, was believed in the world, and was taken up in glory' (translation mine; see also Brox 1898, 159; Collins 2002, 98). Harding sees in this passage a 'divine revelation' due to the use of 'appearing' language and the disclosure of a 'mystery,' which is the content of faith (Harding 2017, 265). The way this passage is embedded in the letter, however, diminishes the import of Harding's interpretation. The possible traditional character of this mystery along with the disclosure of the mystery coming from the authorial Paul rather than a divine figure show a movement away from the apocalypticism of the undisputed Pauline letters. As Harding himself later notes (2017, 266), 1 Timothy 3:16 indicates that the author sees the only appropriate source of revelation is from Paul and his successors. Thus, the move

from divine revelation to apostolic revelation evidences a shift away from the apocalyptic revelation found in the undisputed Paulines.

A further element of apocalypticism noted above is the presence of divine beings. First Timothy contains two references to angels—3:16, discussed above, and 5:21. The reference to angels in 5:21 reads, 'I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels' (translation mine). This is the only place in the New Testament where angels are called 'elect.' Such a designation of angels, however, is found in the *Book of Parables* from 1 Enoch (39:1), itself an apocalyptic work (see Marshall and Towner 1999, 619; Downs 2005, 658). In addition to angels, 1 Timothy has two references to the devil: 3:6 and 3:7. The first verse, 3:6, warns against allowing a new convert to be a bishop (*episkopos*/ἐπίσκοπος) or 'he will fall into the judgement of the devil.' The second reference, 3:7, is similar, warning a bishop (*episkopos*/ἐπίσκοπος) against falling into the 'snare of the devil' (see Downs 2005, 658). The emphasis upon supernatural beings in this letter is similar to that of the undisputed Paulines and shows a retention of this apocalyptic element.

There is an underlying two-age schema found in 1 Timothy. In 6:17, the author speaks of 'those who are rich in the present age.' In 6:14, discussed above, the letter mentions the future coming of Jesus Christ, implying a future age (Harding 2017, 264). Although there are two ages in 1 Timothy, they are different from Paul's periodisation in that they are separate and do not overlap.

The apocalyptic elements discussed above point toward an apocalyptic constellation that is different from that of the undisputed Paulines. The expectation of the coming of Christ is no longer imminent, and it is placed alongside Christ's first 'appearing.' Revelation is no longer from a divine being, but is instead found in Paul and his successors. Divine beings, however, are a major feature of the author's cosmology. There is a two-age dualism, but these ages are separate and do not overlap. It is evident that apocalyptic thought is present in 1 Timothy; however, it is different from that of Paul.

2 Timothy

As with 1 Timothy, the natural place to begin discussing apocalypticism in 2 Timothy is in the letter's reference to the eschatological appearing of Christ. This letter contains two instances of the epiphanic motif noted in 1 Timothy. The first is found in 4:1. Here, the author says, 'I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge the living and the dead, and his appearing and his kingdom' (translation mine). The author uses epiphanic language to describe the 'appearing' of Jesus, which was discussed above (see 1:10 for *epiphania*/ἐπιφάνεια used to describe Jesus's first 'appearance'). More significant for the present discussion, however, is the author's description of Christ Jesus as 'about to judge the living and the dead.' Although Collins has suggested that the use of *mellō*/μέλλω ('be about to') in this verse 'remains as a sign of the lingering influence of the notion that judgment is almost at hand,' it is more likely that *mellō*/μέλλω is used as an alternate way of expressing the simple future (Collins 2002, 267; also Marshall and Towner 1999, 798; Bauer et al. 2000, 627–28). Therefore, rather than emphasise an imminent return of Jesus in judgement, 2 Timothy 4:1 indicates simply that the author expects Jesus to return at an undefined point in the future.

One further verse mentions the 'appearing' of Jesus. In 2 Timothy 4:8, the author mentions that the lord

has the 'crown of righteousness' stored up for him, and that the lord will give this crown to 'all who love his appearing.' Much as the first reference, this mention of the 'appearing' does not contain any definitive temporal markers except the implication (coming from 4:1) that it will be at some point in the future. These two verses together indicate that the future appearing of Jesus is important to the author's eschatology. However, it is structurally different from that of the undisputed Paulines in that there is no clear sign of imminence of Jesus's return.

Divine disclosures of mysteries play no role in 2 Timothy. To be sure, it does mention the manifestation of Jesus Christ in the past using the verb *phaneroō*/φανερῶω in 1:10; however, this is not described as a mystery. Further, this passage is in what is often considered to be traditional material, and therefore it is similar to 1 Timothy 3:16 in that it is not disclosed by a divine being, but by the author. Instead, the emphasis in 2 Timothy is on the correct succession of tradition. This emphasis is most clearly seen in 2 Timothy 2:2, which reads, 'that which you have heard from me through many witnesses, entrust this to faithful men, who will be able also to teach others' (translation mine; see Collins 2002, 220).

Second Timothy contains one reference to 'divine' beings. In 2:26, the author mentions that his opponents have been trapped in the 'snare of the devil,' the same phrase used in 1 Timothy 3:7 (Downs 2005, 658). Unlike 1 Timothy, however, 2 Timothy does not contain any references to angels.

There are references in 2 Timothy to a two-age schematisation of time. In 4:10, the author mentions Demas, who 'loved the present age.' In 4:8, discussed above, the author mentions a crown, which was stored for those who love his appearing. The clear implication here is that there is a future age (Harding 2017, 264). It seems here, though, much as in 1 Timothy, that the two ages do not overlap. The relation between the ages is, however, much less clear in 2 Timothy than in 1 Timothy.

Apocalypticism is evidently present in 2 Timothy. It contains discussions of the future appearance of Jesus, references to divine beings, and two ages. This apocalypticism is not the same as that of the undisputed Paulines. Imminence is absent from the belief in Jesus's future 'appearing,' and there is no reference to divine disclosure of mysteries. Further, the two ages show no sign of overlapping.

Conclusion

First and Second Timothy evidently contain elements of apocalyptic thought. In 1 Timothy, there is an expectation of a non-imminent 'appearing' of Christ, presence of divine beings, and two separate ages, but an absence of divine revelation. Second Timothy also has an expectation of a non-imminent 'appearing' of Christ, presence of divine beings, and two separate ages, but an absence of divine revelation, just as 1 Timothy has. Both documents differ from Paul in the relative imminence of the future coming of Christ and the relations of the ages. Paul sees the future coming as imminent, whereas 1 and 2 Timothy do not. Paul divides time into two overlapping ages, but 1 and 2 Timothy view those ages as separate. First and Second Timothy are similar to Paul in that their cosmologies contain divine beings such as angels and Satan. They differ from Paul regarding divine revelation; Paul emphasises divine revelation, but 1 and 2 Timothy eschew it. Apocalypticism, therefore, is present in 1 and 2 Timothy, but it is markedly different from that of Paul.

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