

## Internal Ethos or Ethos before the Public Forum?

### Titus and His Construct of the Opponents

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Rarely has a request to participate in a symposium plunged me into such chagrin as the request from Mainz to speak about the “ethics of the opponents” of the Epistle to Titus, as if it were about an unknown country for which we have no primary testimonies, only a broken echo which reverberates vaguely to us. The reason for this tricky situation is well-known: The author of Titus does not attempt to argue with his opponents, but rather utilizes the strategy of polemically distancing himself from them in order to stabilize his own followers. Thus we hardly hear anything about how they live and what they think, and when we hear something about them, the information is distorted and brief and does not aid in our understanding of their way of life or their theology. The author does not hold back any means of disqualifying his opponents ethically or morally: He says they are “liars,” they act “out of evil lucre” (Titus 1:11–12), and they are on the hunt “for strife” (Titus 3:9). The other two letters of the *Corpus Pastorale* follow the same pattern. Thus, 2 Timothy notes that the teachers who opposed the truth belong to the kind of people who would appear at the end of time, when lies and amorality spread throughout the world (2 Tim 3:1–9). How can such a wall of malicious prejudice be broken down and a view of the ethos or even “ethics” of these dissenting Christians be opened up?

It can be ruled out that the author fights a phantom such that his polemic is entirely a figment of his own creation.<sup>1</sup> It is however disputed whether his

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<sup>1</sup> This assumption is based upon a strong scholarly consensus. The introductions or excurses dealing with the opponents within recent commentaries serve as a helpful introduction to the question: Ceslas Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 4th ed., Études Bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1969), 85–119 (“Hérétiques et Hétérodoxes”); Norbert Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 5th ed., RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1989), 31–42; Jürgen Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, EKKNT 15 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 228–39 (excursus: “Die Gegner”); Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary, and an Introduction to Titus, I and II Timothy, the Pastoral Epistles*, AB 35 (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 15; Lorenz Oberlinner, *Der Titusbrief*, HThKNT 11/2.3 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1996), 52–73 (excursus: “Die Irrlehrer in den Gemeinden der Pastoralbriefe”); I. Howard Marshall (in collaboration with Philip H. Towner), *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 40–52 (“The Opposition to Paul”); Alfons Weiser, *Der zweite Brief an Timotheus*, EKKNT 16/1 (Düsseldorf: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 210–25 (excur-

opponents are identical with those of 1 and 2 Timothy,<sup>2</sup> or whether the three letters engage on different fronts.<sup>3</sup> Do they offer something like a panorama of contemporary “heretical” views,<sup>4</sup> or are they fighting against a *specific* group whose profile could be reconstructed from their scattered statements?<sup>5</sup> Could it be that the opponents – like the author of the epistles – are “Pauline,” that is, Christians who similarly claim the Pauline heritage for themselves, but understand it in a fundamentally different manner? If this assumption is correct, and there is much to be said in favor of it,<sup>6</sup> we would have to imagine the opponents in the same place where the author of the Pastoral Epistles and his followers are to be found, in the churches of Asia Minor, perhaps in Ephesus or in the surroundings of the Asia Minor metropolis.

Within the context of this essay, it goes without saying that these questions cannot be answered in a remotely satisfying way. I assume that the three letters do not originate from Paul, but are pseudepigrapha with a fabricated author and addressee, and which were constructed as a trilogy. This trilogy was not intended to form an *independent* corpus but was instead appended to an already extensive *Corpus Paulinum*, added on to a *new edition* of the letters, intended to guide their interpretation from the end.<sup>7</sup> It is probable that this new edition

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sus: “Sinngehalt und theologiegeschichtlicher Ort der Irrlehre, die Auferstehung sei schon geschehen (2,18)”; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). Cf. also Lloyd Keith Pietersen, *The Polemic of the Pastorals. A Sociological Examination of the Development of Pauline Christianity*, LNTS 264 (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 41: “An immediate problem is whether we are dealing with the same basic phenomenon in all three letters. On the whole, this appears to be the more likely interpretation of the evidence”; likewise Brox, Roloff, Oberlinner, Weiser, among others.

<sup>3</sup> Jens Herzer, “Juden – Christen – Gnostiker. Zur Gegnerproblematik der Pastoralbriefe,” *BTZ* 25 (2008): 143–68; idem, “Was ist falsch an der ‘fälschlich so genannten Gnosis’? Zur Paulusrezeption des Ersten Timotheusbriefes im Kontext seiner Gegnerpolemik,” *Early Christianity* 5 (2014): 68–96; idem, “Zwischen Mythos und Wahrheit. Neue Perspektiven auf die sog. Pastoralbriefe,” *NTS* 63 (2017): 428–50; idem, “Vom Sinn und Nutzen der Polemik. Zur Pragmatik der Gegnerinvektiven in den Pastoralbriefen,” in *Gegenspieler. Zur Auseinandersetzung mit dem Gegner in frühjüdischer und urchristlicher Literatur*, ed. Michael Tilly and Ulrich Mell, WUNT 428 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 183–205.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 66: “an apologetic *vademecum* for all sorts of anti-Gnostic conflicts”; similarly in Peter Trummer, *Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe*, BBET 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1978), 169.

<sup>5</sup> Oberlinner, *Der Titusbrief*, 52: “the only possible way to determine the basic features of the heresy being fought against [seems to be] to create a theologically coherent and historically appropriate picture from the various pieces of the mosaic.”

<sup>6</sup> Cf. below at 2.1.

<sup>7</sup> On the introductory questions of the Pastoral Epistles, see the recent and comprehensive work by Martina Janßen, “Corpus pastorale catholicum. Studien zu Komposition und Intention der Pastoralbriefe” (Habilitation, Göttingen, 2019). – On the claim that the author of the Pastoral Epistles reinterpreted Paul by letting “himself” have the last word on the topics discussed, cf. Annette Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe*, NTOA/StUNT 52 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,

arose in the second quarter of the 2nd century in Asia Minor, in a pre-Marcionite “gentile Christian” milieu within which a general forgetfulness of Israel was widespread, a characteristic that marks all three epistles.<sup>8</sup> When Titus 1:10 specifically attacks “the teachers who came from the circumcision group” (οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς), the reference to the Jewish origin is used for their theological defamation, which only works within a “gentile Christian” milieu.<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the strategy of polemical demarcation without an argumentative discussion of the opposing positions, which is used in all *three* epistles,<sup>10</sup> differs clearly from the argumentative style of the authentic Pauline epistles. Paul could also be polemical, but he never left his opponents’ arguments standing; he wanted to convince his readers.

The construct of the opponents in the three epistles also has a share in their pseudepigraphic fictionality: When the pastoral “Paul” warns of the “heretics” (Titus 3:10),<sup>11</sup> who in fact would have only appeared in the presence of the real

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2004); for a case study, cf. Michael Theobald, “Das ‘Kirchliche Amt’ – kein Grund für Kirchenspaltung. Oder wie wir die paulinische Briefsammlung lesen sollten: von hinten (Pastoralbriefe) oder von vorne her (Römerbrief)? Historisch-kritisch oder kanonisch?” in *Exegese – ökumenisch engagiert. Der “Evangelisch-Katholische Kommentar” in der Diskussion über 500 Jahre Reformation*, ed. Ulrich Luz, Thomas Söding, and Samuel Vollenweider (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2016), 119–28.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Theobald, *Israel-Vergessenheit in den Pastoralbriefen. Ein neuer Vorschlag zu ihrer historisch-theologischen Verortung im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ignatius-Briefe*, SBS 229 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2016); idem, “Zur Datierung der Pastoralbriefe. Parameter zur Ausmessung ihres Entstehungskorridors,” in *Das Baujahr hinter der Kulisse. Zur Datierung neutestamentlicher Spätschriften*, ed. Wolfgang Grünstäudl and Matthias Schmidt, WUNT 470 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 355–83; Gerd Häfner takes up the keyword “Israel-Vergessenheit” in Gerd Häfner and Stefan Schreiber, “Pastoralbriefe und Johannesoffenbarung. Kontroverse Einstellungen zu Staat und Gesellschaft,” in *Kontroverse Stimmen im Kanon*, ed. Martin Ebner, Gerd Häfner, and Konrad Huber, QD 279 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2016), 10–63, here 26–28.

<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Stegemann, “Antisemitische und rassistische Vorurteile in Titus 1,10–16,” *KuI* 11 (1996): 46–61; Christine Gerber, “Antijudaismus und Apologetik. Eine Lektüre des Titusbriefes vor dem Hintergrund der Apologie *Contra Apionem* des Flavius Josephus,” in *Josephus und das Neue Testament. Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen*, ed. Christfried Böttrich and Jens Herzer, WUNT 209 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 335–63.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to Titus 1:10–15; 3:9–11, cf. also 1 Tim 1:3–7, 19–20; 4:1–5; 6:3–10, 20b–21; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:16–18, 23–26; 3:1–9; 4:3–4.

<sup>11</sup> Titus 3:10–11: “You are to reject/eject (παραίτου) a heretical person (αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον) after one or two warnings/rebukings (νουθεσίαν), knowing that such a person (ὁ τοιοῦτος) is on the wrong path and is sinful – condemning himself (αὐτοκατάκριτος).” The corresponding substantive αἵρεσις with the sense of *heresy* only occurs in 2 Pet 2:1; Ign., *Eph.* 6:2; *Trall.* 6:1. This fits the time-period of the second quarter of the 2nd cent. Cf. Marcel Simon, “From Greek Hairesis to Christian Heresy,” in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: in honorem Robert M. Grant*, ed. William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilken, ThH 54 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), 101–16; Alain Le Boulluec, *La Notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque, IIe–IIIe siècles. Tome I: De Justin à Irénée* (Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 1985), especially, 41–48; Eduard Iricinschi and Holger Michael Zellentin, *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, TSAJ 119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

author of the epistles several decades after the death of the apostle, this temporal difference is veiled by means of different literary techniques. I mention three here: (1) The “Paul” of the *Corpus Pastorale* acts *prophylactically*; he is presented as someone who *knows* about the (coming) dangers. If “Titus” in Crete is supposed to endow the “elders” with “episcopal” responsibility, it is to serve the purpose that they instruct the churches “in sound doctrine” and rebuke “those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). “For there are many (πολλοί) disobedient, empty talkers and deceivers” (Titus 1:10) who “must be stopped” (Titus 1:11). (2) In Titus, “Paul” speaks of something that is happening *elsewhere*, on the island of Crete, with its proverbial many cities<sup>12</sup> (cf. Titus 1:5). The perspective is not that of “Titus” on Crete (cf. Titus 1:5; 3:12), but that of the implicitly addressed readers, who gain insight into the letter to “Titus.”<sup>13</sup> We have to imagine that they are in Asia Minor, not on Crete.<sup>14</sup> “Paul” transports – seen from their point of view – the “many” opponents to *another* place, whereby such a spatial construction of alterity supports the pseudepigraphic fiction.<sup>15</sup> (3) Alterity also works *temporally*. “Paul” refers both in 1 Tim 4:1–5 and 2 Tim 3:1–5 to the fact that “in later” or “the last times” insubordinate people will appear, false teachers who try to confuse the faithful. When “Paul” calls up his addressee “Timothy” to “turn away from these people” (2 Tim 3:5), it indicates that these “last times” are dawning.

The fictionality of the concept of the opponents is related to the fact that some statements remain general or vague: “For there are *many* (πολλοί) disobedient” (Titus 1:10). “*Certain* (τινες) people have fallen away from faith” (1 Tim 4:1). “The sins of *certain* people (τινῶν ἀνθρώπων αἱ ἁμαρτίαι)” (1 Tim 5:24) have been revealed.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, demarcations are indicated: In Titus 3:14, we are

<sup>12</sup> Homer, *Il.* 2.649: “Crete with its hundred cities”; *Od.* 19.174 (“ninety cities”); Horace, *Carm.* 3.27, 33–34.

<sup>13</sup> Not only the talk of the “*our*” (οἱ ἡμέτεροι) in Titus 3:14, but also the greeting assigned to “those who love us in faith” (Titus 3:15b) as well as the concluding encouragement of χάρις to “*you all*” (Titus 3:15c) embeds the fictitious communication between “Paul” and “Titus” within a broader readership that is committed to the pastoral cause.

<sup>14</sup> Two observations on this: (1) If the fictitious “Paul” in Titus 1:12 defames the inhabitants of Crete in a *general* way with a sentence attributed to the Cretan Epimenides, he can only hope for approval in this way with non-Cretans. (2) Tychicus, whom “Paul” might wish to send to Crete to replace Titus (3:12), is traditionally associated with Ephesus (cf. Col 4:7; Eph 6:21; also 2 Tim 4:12 – Acts 20:4: Tychicus, an Ἀσιανός “one from Asia [Minor].”). Thus “Paul” seems to write from Ephesus or Asia Minor, which we can also imagine is the location of the implicit readership.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Oberlinner, *Der Titusbrief*, 21–22: “For the choice of a place further away from Ephesus, it might play a role that the two apostolic disciples were to be assigned to different areas for their mission. In this way, the churches of the Pastoral Epistles, which were probably not directly connected with either two places, could be made aware of the wide spread of the church order organized and authorized by ‘Paul.’”

<sup>16</sup> Use of the πολλοί or τινες as references to the opponents is already attested in Paul: (οἱ) πολλοί in 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:17; 11:18; Phil 3:18 (“the many” already has a disparaging ring to it in the Socratic dialogues of Plato). Τινες in Rom 3:8; 2 Cor 3:1; Gal 1:7.

told of the “our” (οἱ ἡμέτεροι) and shortly before in Titus 3:10, we are told that “Titus” “should admonish the αἰρετικὸς ἄνθρωπος once and then twice,” and then to “avoid” him.<sup>17</sup> This construct permits a glance at the factual situation of the communities.

The so-called “heretics” still belong to and participate in the life of the communities. The metaphor in 2 Tim 2:20–21 says that there are different kinds of dishes: those “for honorable use,” and also those for “dishonorable use.” “In a large house, there are not only golden and silver vessels but also wooden and clay vessels.”<sup>18</sup> Plainly said: From the author’s perspective, the situation is diffuse. He demands clarity in matters of faith and above all of order and wishes to tighten his own ranks.<sup>19</sup> If this diagnosis is accurate, then it follows that it would be incorrect to speak of a separation or divorce of different directions in the ecclesial context of the Pastoral Epistles that had already taken place, but rather of a dispute about which of the two directions gains the upper hand and prevails.

If, against this background, the question of the ethical views of the opponents is asked, then this question seems to be posed in a way that promises to be profitable only if it is posed at the same time as a question about the corresponding ethical views of the author of Titus and of the other two epistles, so that their answer contributes to a better understanding of the epistles themselves. The following *thesis* will be discussed below: Titus, which we assume is the original, initial letter among the Pastoral Epistles trilogy,<sup>20</sup> pursues – like the other two epistles – the option of promoting the ethos of the communities and the law and order derived from it *in the context of recognized socio-ethical standards*, that is, *understanding and practicing ethos before the public forum*. The theological foundation for this option is the conviction of God’s *universal* will to save in Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup> If God “wants *all* people to be saved” (1 Tim 2:4),<sup>22</sup> it is necessary to be open to *all* and to live in such a way that *all* people in the polis are addressed by

<sup>17</sup> See above at n. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Such a “house,” according to the author of the Pastoral Epistles, is the “house” of the *ekklesia*; cf. 1 Tim 3:15.

<sup>19</sup> Therefore Titus 3:14 also speaks pointedly of the “our” (οἱ ἡμέτεροι) and Titus 3:15 of a circle around “Paul” in which people “love” each other.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the alternative that 1 Timothy opened the corpus (2 Timothy was in any case at the end), see most recently Gerd Häfner, “Die Pastoralbriefe (1Tim/2Tim/Tit),” in *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, ed. Martin Ebner and Stefan Schreiber, 3rd ed., Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie 6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2020), 459–83, here 467–68.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Theobald, “Lauter Milde allen Menschen gegenüber!” (Tit 3,2). Grenzüberschreitendes Ethos in den Pastoralbriefen,” in *Biblical Ethics and Application. Purview, Validity, and Relevance of Biblical Texts in Ethical Discourse*, FS Jan Van der Watt, Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik/Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics 9, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Stephan Joubert, WUNT 384 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 305–29 (I continue this contribution here with a view towards the question of the opponents).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. 1 Tim 4:10; Titus 2:11: “bringing salvation to all men.”

the life of the believers and that individuals may join them.<sup>23</sup> The fact that the author of the Pastoral Epistles repeatedly emphasizes this option in its different facets indicates that he represents it in opposition to and in demarcation from the *internal ethical* views of his opponents. They rely on rigorism and asceticism and profess a lifestyle that cannot be “identical” with an “existence under the conditions of this world.”<sup>24</sup> From the perspective of the author of the Pastoral Epistles, they cultivate a *group ethos* whose specific outline consists in the fact that it relies on demarcation and does not appeal to “ordinary” people. There are enough indications in the text that point in this direction.

### 1. The Normative Significance of an Urban/Social “Public Sphere” for the Author of the Pastoral Epistles

The relationship between the *public* and the *private* sphere is subject to profound changes from culture to culture.<sup>25</sup> The architecture of the polis is already revealing for the Hellenistic-Roman world.<sup>26</sup> In the center of the polis are the public squares and spaces where the free citizens discuss the affairs of the *res publica*:<sup>27</sup> the *agora*, the *bouleuterion* or the *theater*, including the *temples*, which, insofar as they were dedicated to a city god or Roman gods, are places of public cults. Around this center, the residential quarters, which serve the private sphere, the *vita domestica*, are crowded together, whereby the *oikos*, the house, is also the most important economic unit. Both spheres, the public and the private, overlap, clearly visible in the roles of the *oikodespotēs*, the master of the *oikos*, who acts both within the public and the private spheres.<sup>28</sup> The shape of the *vita domes-*

<sup>23</sup> One can speak of a proreptic function of the cultivation of a Christian ethos: Jörg Ulrich, *Justin. Apologien*, KFA 4/5 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2019), 80: “The behavior of Christians in everyday life exerts an evident power of persuasion on outsiders.” (with reference to Justin, *1 Apol.* 16.4).

<sup>24</sup> Thus Oberlinner, *Der Titusbrief*, 57.

<sup>25</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft. Mit einem Vorwort zur Neuauflage 1990*, 6th ed., Stw 891 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999). Cf. also Hasso Hofmann, “Öffentlich/privat,” in HWPh 6:1131–1134, ed. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel (Basel: Schwabe, 1984), as well as Lucian Hölscher, “Öffentlichkeit,” HWPh 6:1134–40.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Martin Ebner, *Die Stadt als Lebensraum der ersten Christen. Das Urchristentum in seiner Umwelt I*, GNT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 44–100.

<sup>27</sup> In Rome, as in the provinces, court proceedings were “as a rule public, at least until the middle of the 2nd century CE.” “*Public*” has a different meaning here than it did in the Republic and the early Principality. It means that the trial took place in the forum or in other places, or at most in one of the open courtrooms (*basilicae*)” (Wolfgang Kunkel, “Prinzipien des römischen Strafverfahrens,” in *Wolfgang Kunkel. Kleine Schriften*, ed. Hubert Niederländer [Weimar: Böhlau, 1974], 11–31, here 23–24 with ample supporting evidence).

<sup>28</sup> “[I]t was ... their private autonomy as masters of households on which their participation in public life depended. The private sphere was attached to the house not by (its Greek) name

*tica* is not subject to arbitrariness, but to public expectations, as the literature pertaining to economics demonstrates.<sup>29</sup>

The first Christian *ekklesiai* at the edge of the synagogues were, as is well known, organized in the form of “house-hold” cells. Paul sees them linked together in an ideal unity within the public sphere, as can be seen from the fact that he addresses his letters, for example, “to the *ekklesia* of God which is in Corinth,” which is more than a simple address: Because *ekklesia* is a genuinely political term,<sup>30</sup> it deals with the eschatological claim of the gospel within the public sphere of the world.<sup>31</sup> According to 1 Corinthians 14:23–25, the openness of the small *ekklesiai* to non-believers, on which their missionary attraction depends, means that for Paul their discourse must be reasonable and understandable to strangers who come to them. How does religious exuberance help when strangers are repelled? From the very beginning, Christians have known about the importance of the public sphere of the polis because it is the dominion of God who claims the whole world in Jesus Christ. But it seems to take a long time until the public, *conversely* with its ethical ideas of order, has an effect on the inner space of the *ekklesiai*, even though it is the same people who live in both spheres.<sup>32</sup> When Paul admonishes his addressees in 1 Thess 4:10–12 to behave well “before those outside” (πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω), he is not yet concerned with “bourgeois normality” in the inner sphere.<sup>33</sup> Instead, his efforts are directed at

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only. Movable wealth and control over labor power were no more substitutes for being the master of a household and of a family than, conversely, poverty and a lack of slaves would in themselves prevent admission to the polis. Exile, expropriation, and the destruction of the house amounted to one and the same thing. *Status in the polis was therefore based upon status as the unlimited master of an oikos*” (Habermas, *Strukturwandel*, 56; ET: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger with assistance of Fredrick Lawrence [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989], 3; emphasis mine); Susan E. Hylan, “Public and Private Space and Action in the Early Roman Period,” in *NTS* 66 (2020): 534–53, esp. 540–50, shows clearly: „The overlap between public and private functions and space makes the neat divisions of modern scholarship untenable“ (50).

<sup>29</sup> On this, see *Oikonomika. Quellen zur Wirtschaftstheorie der griechischen Antike*, prefaced, ed., and trans. Gert Audring and Kai Brodersen, TzF 92 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> Erik Peterson, *Ausgewählte Schriften: Ekklesia. Studien zum altchristlichen Kirchenbegriff, Sonderband* (Würzburg: Echter, 2010), 15–20 (“The profane ‘*ekklesia*’ in the Roman Empire”); Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “καλέω κτλ.,” in *TWNT* 3:488–539, here 516–20; Olof Linton, “*Ekklesia*,” *RAC* 4:905–21; Peter J. Rhodes, “*Ekklesia*,” *DNP* 3:934–36; Boris Repschinski, “*Ekklesia* als Kultgemeinde oder Volksversammlung? Zur Genese des Begriffs in Apostelgeschichte und Matthäusevangelium,” *ZKT* 137 (2015): 346–65, here 347–49.

<sup>31</sup> Schmidt, *TDNT* 3:518: “Thus, although ἐκκλησία is from the very first a secular and worldly expression, it expresses the supreme claim of the Christian community in face of the world.” Peterson, *Ekklesia*; see therein Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, “*Ekklesia*, Polis und Synagoge. Überlegungen im Anschluss an Erik Peterson,” 152–95.

<sup>32</sup> On the “practical constraints” in the everyday life of an ancient polis, cf. Thomas Johann Bauer, *Das tausendjährige Messiasreich der Johannesoffenbarung. Eine literarkritische Studie zu Offb 19,11–21,8*, BZNW 148 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 289–314.

<sup>33</sup> Accentuated differently, see Jürgen Becker, “Feindesliebe – Nächstenliebe – Bruderliebe.

avoiding unnecessary offence from “those outside.” Occasionally he can argue with the socially “decent” in order to prevent customs from creeping into the Corinthian *ekklesia* (1 Cor 11:2–16). 1 Corinthians offers numerous examples of a struggle for the right placement of the *ekklesia* in the public space of the polis.

The question as to when Christian *ekklesiai* are publicly recognized as relevant entities also depends on the assessment of their growth.<sup>34</sup> In Rome the Christians were already publicly perceived in 64 CE (city fire under Nero).<sup>35</sup> An echo from Bithynia is provided by the letters of Pliny, which respond to Christian activity in 112 CE.<sup>36</sup> From the middle of the 2nd century, the phenomenon of “literary publicity”<sup>37</sup> gained significance: Several Christian texts, which belong to the group of the so-called “apologetic” literature, such as the apologies of Aristides or Justin, have dedications to the emperor (i. e., public authorities).<sup>38</sup> This innovation in early Christian literary history<sup>39</sup> goes hand in hand with a discovery and growing appreciation of ancient education by Christians. The Christian *ekklesiai* enter the public consciousness as relevant social groups, are noticed,

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Exegetische Beobachtungen als Anfrage an ein ethisches Problemfeld,” in idem, *Annäherungen. Zur urchristlichen Theologiegeschichte und zum Umgang mit ihren Quellen, Ausgewählte Aufsätze zum 60. Geburtstag mit einer Bibliographie des Verfassers*, ed. Ulrich Mell, BZNW 76 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 382–94, here 387, on 1 Thess 4:1–12, a text that regulates “above all and primarily their (sc. the Christian small groups) inner relationship.” “The external relationship only comes into view at the very end: Outside one should not take offence at Christians, therefore it is necessary to realize ‘bourgeois’ normality. This fundamental structure of concentrating on the internal relationship and from there on the determination of the external relationship is not inherent in 1 Thess 4 by chance, but characterizes the typical early Christian admonition in general.” Concerning this, Becker refers to the “structural disposition of the admonition” in 1 Thess 5:12–15; Gal 5:13–6:10; Rom 12,1–2; Col 3:2–17; Eph 5:1–11; Heb 13:1–6; 1 Pet 2:13–17; 3:8–9; 4:7–11 etc.

<sup>34</sup> Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Geschichte des Urchristentums. Ein Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 420; cf. also Franz Dünzl, *Fremd in dieser Welt? Das frühe Christentum zwischen Welttdistanz und Weltverantwortung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2015), 183–303 (“The expansion of Christianity and its impact on the religiousness of early Christians”), especially 183–86 (“Geographical overview”).

<sup>35</sup> Christians in Rome were indeed affected by the Edict of Claudius in 49 CE (see Acts 18:2), but they were probably not perceived by the public as an independent group in contrast to the Jews, but as Jews with messianic activities.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Plinius Secundus, *ep.* 10.96, along with the answer of Emperor Trajan (*ep.* 10.97).

<sup>37</sup> This term has been borrowed from Habermas, *Strukturwandel*, 88, 89, among other places (see the index, p. 386).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Justin, *1 Apol.* 1.1: “To Emperor Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus” (on this, see Ulrich, *Justin*, 64–68); Aristides, Superscript: “To the ruler of the world, Caesar Titus Hadrianus Antoninus” (on this, see Michael Lattke, *Aristides “Apologie,”* KFA 2, [Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder 2018], 29–30); cf. also the Quadratus Fragment (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.3.2; according to Eusebius, dedicated and presented to Emperor Caesar Hadrian). – Wolfram Kinzig, “Der ‘Sitz im Leben’ der Apologie in der Alten Kirche,” *ZKG* 100 (1989): 291–317.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Philipp Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur. Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), §1 (“The task”), where he develops criteria for his definition of early Christian literature, among which he no longer counts the Apologists. In fact, from the perspective of the “public sphere” presented here, they represent a literary novelty.

but are also observed critically. The pressure to defend themselves in the face of prejudices and attacks from the outside is growing. This leads to the “apologetic” literature. The Pastoral Epistles were written before this shift. They belong to the genre of *inner-congregational* writings, but they also give a clear indication of a change in perspective, as the congregational code in Titus 2:1–10 demonstrates.

1.1 “so that (ἵνα) the word of God will not be blasphemed (μὴ ... βλασφημεῖται)” (Titus 2:5). *Public Perception of a Christian Lifestyle as an Argument of the Paraenesis*

The congregational instructions in Titus 2:1–15, from which we begin, is directed – in contrast to the “household codes” (*Haustafeln*) of the Deuteropauline literature – not at the members of an *oikos* but instead at five “instances” of the local *ekklesia* through the mediation of the addressed “Titus,” the representative of future church leaders. He is to instruct them: the older men and women, who in turn are to instruct the young women;<sup>40</sup> the young men – among them the author counts “Titus,” who is to be an example for them; finally, the slaves.<sup>41</sup> While the instructions for the older and younger men are brief and without any particular motivation, the author brings older women and slaves into discussion within the *oikos*: in the instruction of the young women by the older women, he brings the men and children of the young women into play; in the instruction of the slaves, he brings their masters into play. Both sequences, like the one concerning “Titus,” each lead to an indication of motives, which are designed in the same way and divide the paraenesis with its refrain-like character into three sections (Titus 2:1–5/6–8/9). In terms of content, they thematize the *public perception* of the behavior demanded in the polis:

2:5c: so that (ἵνα) the word of God might not be blasphemed (μὴ ... βλασφημεῖται)

2:8b: so that (ἵνα) the opponent (ὁ ἐξ ἐναντίας) might be put to shame and nothing bad might be said about us

2:10c: so that (ἵνα) they [sc. the slaves] might adorn (κοσμῶσιν) the teaching (τὴν διδασκαλίαν) of our God and Savior in everything

<sup>40</sup> Klaus Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament,” in ANRW 2:25.2, 1031–432, here 1083–84, refers to parallels in the Pythagorean Epistles; Theano to Callisto: “Indeed, to you younger women authority has been given by custom to rule over the household slaves once you have been married, but the teaching ought to come from the older women because they are forever giving advice about household management. For it is good first to learn the things you do not know and to consider the counsel of the older women the most suitable; for a young soul must be brought up in these teachings from girlhood.” Cf. Annette Bourland Huizenga, *Moral Education for Women in the Pastoral and Pythagorean Letters: Philosophers of the Household* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2013), 50.

<sup>41</sup> On the structure and genre of the text, cf. Alfons Weiser, “Titus 2 als Gemeindepäranese,” in *Neues Testament und Ethik. Für Rudolf Schnackenburg*, ed. Helmut Merklein (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1989), 397–414; cf. idem, “Evangelisierung im antiken ‘Haus,’” in *Studien zu Christsein und Kirche*, SBAB 9 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990), 119–48, here 141–46.

The author explicitly refers to the “word” or the “teaching of God,” which is not to be discredited by outsiders but on the contrary is to command respect. But this is not to be achieved directly through missionary activity, but indirectly through an exemplary socio-ethical behavior of Christians within their community/*oikos*, which corresponds to that of their environment.<sup>42</sup> According to contemporary economics, the neuralgic points are the behavior of the subordinates within the hierarchy: that of the (young) women towards their husbands or that of the slaves towards their masters. This language seems to be self-evident. If the leader of the community, who is typified in the figure of “Titus,” instructs the community according to these ideas, this makes an impression on those who are far away or are even possible opponents of the community. Like an *oikodespotēs*, he too moves on the borderline between inside and outside of the community, and he is recognized within his role in the polis.

It should be noted that the first indication of a motivation in v. 5 might well be an adaptation of the prophet’s word in Isa 52:5 LXX, which Paul already quotes in Rom 2:24 in his accusation of the Jews who do not keep the Law: “*For the name of God is blasphemed among the nations because of you* (τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ δι’ ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), as it is written.” Instead of the “name,” Titus 2:5 speaks of the “word of God,” but the related slave paraenesis in 1 Tim 6:1 clearly alludes to Isa 52:5 LXX.

Those who are under the yoke as slaves  
 should hold their own masters worthy of all honor,  
 so that *the name of God* (τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ) and the teaching (ἡ διδασκαλία) might not  
 be *blasphemed* (βλασφημεῖται).<sup>43</sup>

Although Paul already adapts Isa 52:5 LXX against the original sense of the Scriptures – according to both, the Hebrew and the Septuagint texts, the name of God is blasphemed among the nations because God could not prevent his people from being led away into captivity – Paul and the later adaptations of Isa 52:5<sup>44</sup> are not alone in this, but are part of an early Jewish tradition, as T. Naph. 8:6 proves:

But for the one who does not do good,  
 both angels and men will curse him,  
 and *God will be despised among the nations because of him* (ὁ θεὸς ἀδοξήσει ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> In terms of structure, Matt 5:16 is comparable: “let your light shine before men so that (ὅπως) they may see your good works (ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα) and praise (δοξάσωσιν) your Father in heaven.”

<sup>43</sup> The proximity of 1 Tim 6:1 to Titus 2 is also evident in the inclusion of the term διδασκαλία (cf. Titus 2:10).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. also Ezek 36:20.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. 2 Sam 12:14; Mek. Exod. 15:2: “If the Israelites do God’s will, then his name will be made great in the world ...; but if they do not do his will, *his name will be dishonored in this world*”

While the *topos* calls to mind the responsibility of the Jews in the Diaspora to contribute to the greater glory of their God “among the peoples” by their manner of life, the Pastoral Epistles use the *topos* specifically within their socio-ethical discourse: Christians should be able to justify their ethical behavior before the public forum.

### 1.2 Additional Evidence for the *Topos* of “Public Perception” (1 Tim 3:7; 1 Pet 2:12; Polycarp 10:2–3 etc.)

(a) Not only the slave paraenesis in 1 Tim 6:1 but also the list of duties for the episcopal office in 1 Tim 3:1–7 uses the *topos* in a context (vv. 4–7) that indicates the “permeability” of different social spheres:

- 4 a (The *episkopos* must) preside over *his own house* well (τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον),
  - b he must raise his children with discipline and with all decency
- 5 a – for if someone does not know how to manage *his own house* (εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν),
  - b how will he care for *God’s church* (ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται)? –
- 6 a (He is) not (permitted to be) a new convert,
  - b so that he may become arrogant
  - c and thus fall to the condemnation of the devil.
- 7 a Rather, he must also (δεῖ δὲ καί) have a good reputation *among outsiders* (ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν),
  - b so that (ἵνα) he might not (μὴ) be defamed and (thereby) fall into the devil’s trap.

The *first* social sphere is the *oikos*. In it, the person who is about to take responsibility within God’s *ekklesia* (i. e., the *second* social sphere within a Christian’s network) must prove himself as *oikodespotēs*. Because such a responsible person (like the *oikodespotēs*) is publicly perceived within the polis – the *third* social sphere – he must “have a good reputation among outsiders.” Verse 7 is syntactically structured like that of Titus 2:5, 8, 10,<sup>46</sup> and argues like Titus 2 with the “public perception.” It presupposes that publicly appreciated standards and values apply to the episcopal ministry. “The leadership of the community was ... not only responsible for the correct procedures, but also for its external reputation (cf. 1 Tim 3:7; Ign., *Trall.* 3:2).”<sup>47</sup>

(Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael: A Critical Edition on the Basis of the MSS and Early Editions with an English Translation, Introduction and Notes* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 3 Vol. 1976], 2:28–29).

<sup>46</sup> The instruction formulated with an absolute δεῖ is followed by a negated ἵνα-clause, a reference to the “public perception,” which is parallel to the examples from Titus 2 and serves as justification for the criterion cited.

<sup>47</sup> Markus Öhler, *Geschichte des frühen Christentums*, UTB 4737 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 323. Ignatius, *Trall.* 3:2 says concerning the *episkopos* in the community: “The godless probably even respect him.”

(b) In another constellation, the topos of the “public perception” of the Christian lifestyle to be considered is found in 1 Pet 2:11–12, the opening of the second main part of the letter (1 Pet 2:11–4:11), which calls Christians to prove themselves in the everyday life of the world and its orders. Although the addressees experience themselves as strangers and guests in the polis because of the hostility to the Christian name and the accusation of disloyal behavior (cf. 1 Pet 4:14, 16), they are nevertheless supposed to convince their pagan neighbors by “living well”:

- 11 a Beloved,  
 b I admonish you as strangers and guests [sc. in this world],  
 c to abstain from carnal lusts  
 which fight against your soul!
- 12 a Lead a good life *among the gentiles* (τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ... καλὴν),  
 b *so that* (ἵνα) they,  
 if they slander you as evildoers (ὡς κακοποιῶν),  
*on account of your good works* (ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων),  
 if they look (ἐπιπτεῦοντες) (more closely),  
*they will praise God* (δοξάσωσιν), on the day of visitation (Isa 10:3).

When v. 12, which is syntactically and semantically similar to the previous examples, calls upon the addressees to “live well among the gentiles,” “there is no doubt that there is a certain agreement between Christians and their environment as to what should be considered good and evil.”<sup>48</sup> If their confession of Christ brings them the reputation of “evildoers” (κακοποιοί), their “good works” should convince others in the polis in such a way that, even on the “day of visitation” (i. e., on the day of judgment), they “praise God” and thereby – it may be added – are saved. Verse 12 takes up Matt 5:16 and adapts this Gospel saying to the new situation.

(c) This third example for the postulated topos, the instruction from the Epistle of Polycarp 10:2d–3a,<sup>49</sup> once again takes up Isa 52:5 and is syntactically designed like the previous examples (instruction + final clause):

- 2 a When you are able to do *good* (*benefacere*),  
 do not postpone it (cf. Prov 3:27–28),  
 b for almsgiving delivers from death (cf. Tob 4:10).  
 c All of you be subject to one another (cf. plnEph 5:21; 1 Pet 5:5; Ign. *Magn.* 13:2)!
- d Walk blamelessly *among the gentiles* (*conversationem vestram irreprehensibilem habentes in gentibus*) (cf. 1 Pet 2:12),  
 e so that you yourselves might be praised on account of your *good works* (*ut ex bonis operibus vestris et vos laudem accipiatis*)  
 f and the Lord may not be *blasphemed* on account of you (*et dominus in vobis non blasphemetur*).
- 3 a *Woe* to him by whom *the name of the Lord is blasphemed* (*per quem nomen domini blasphematur*) (Isa 52:5).

<sup>48</sup> Wolfgang Schrage, *Die Katholischen Briefe. Der Erste Petrusbrief*, NTD 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 59–117, here 86.

<sup>49</sup> It belongs to the part of the letter that has only been handed down in Latin.

- b Therefore, teach all sobriety (*sobrietatem*),  
in which you also walk.

On the one hand, the instruction in v. 2d, e seems to tie in with 1 Pet 2:12;<sup>50</sup> on the other hand, it clearly alludes to Isa 52:5 in its continuation into v. 3a. Again it deals with *benefacere*, the contents of which there seems to be agreement between Christians and *gentes*. When Christians do good, they can expect recognition for their good deeds from their environment.

### 1.3 Summary

These three examples, which can easily be multiplied,<sup>51</sup> illustrate how ethical views were chosen in a broad corridor of early Christian tradition, which Christians believed not only corresponded to God's will expressed in their gospel, but also had the capacity for majority support in the contemporary polis.<sup>52</sup> This applies not only to values and norms – as can be seen, for example, in the reception of the Greek-Hellenistic tradition of the so-called cardinal virtues<sup>53</sup> or catalogues of virtues and vices<sup>54</sup> – but also to socio-ethical questions about be-

<sup>50</sup> The interpretation of this fact is controversial. While Johannes B. Bauer, *Die Polykarpbriefe*, KAV 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 64, explains: "The words of the impeccable change among the Gentiles come from 1 Peter 2:12," Marlis Gielen conversely sees the 1 Peter as dependent upon Polycarp: "Der Polykarpbrief und der 1. Petrusbrief. Versuch einer Neubestimmung ihres literarischen Verhältnisses," in *Aneignung durch Transformation. Beiträge zur Analyse von Überlieferungsprozessen im frühen Christentum*, FS Michael Theobald, ed. Wilfried Eisele, Christoph Schaefer, and Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, HBS 74 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2013), 416–44.

<sup>51</sup> The following adaptations of Isa 52:5 should be mentioned in addition: (1) 1 Clem. 47:7: "And this news [cf. v. 7: that the 'ekklesia of the Corinthians is rebelling against the presbyters on account of one or two people'] reached not only us but also those who are of a different mind than ours, so that even *blasphemies* against the *name of the Lord* have been brought forward because of your foolishness (καὶ βλασφημίας ἐπιφέρεσθαι τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου διὰ τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀπροσύνην), and you have even brought yourself into danger." – (2) 2 Clem. 13:1–2: "And let us not please men, nor let us please only one another, but also those outside by right action, so that the name is not blasphemed because of us" (ἵνα τὸ ὄνομα δι' ἡμᾶς μὴ βλασφημηῖται). – (3) Ignatius, *Trallians* 8:2: "Do not offend the Gentiles, lest the church of God be *blasphemed* because of some unwise people! For woe to him by whom out of folly *my name is blasphemed* before anyone" (δι' οὗ ἐπὶ ματαιότητι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπὶ τινων βλασφημεῖται). The woe is close at hand in Polycarp, *Phil.* 10:3.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. also Willem Cornelis van Unnik, "Die Rücksicht auf die Reaktion der Nicht-Christen als Motiv in der altchristlichen Paränese," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche*, FS Joachim Jeremias, ed. Walther Eltester, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964), 221–34.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Titus 2:12; on this, see Stephen Charles Mott, "Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion. The philonic Background of Titus II 10–14 and III 3–7," *NovT* 20 (1978): 22–48; furthermore Friedrich W. Horn, "Paulus und die Kardinaltugenden," in *Paulus – Werk und Wirkung*, FS Andreas Lindemann, ed. Paul-Gerhard Klumbies and David S. du Toit (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 351–69.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Titus 3:2, 3; 1 Tim 1:9, 10; 6:11; 2 Tim 3:2–5, etc.

havior in the *oikos*<sup>55</sup> and the authorities in the polis under the conditions of the *Imperium Romanum*.<sup>56</sup> Thus it is not surprising that the social environment influences the internal order of the communities and that, despite their foreignness in the world, tendencies of adaptation to environmental norms are evident.

The pagan philosopher Celsus with his *Alēthēs Logos* (from the years between 177 and 180<sup>57</sup>) may provide a control. He declares the “ethical teaching” of the Christians to be, when compared with Plato, certainly not a “new science” (1.4).<sup>58</sup> He concretizes this in the Christian talk of “humility”(6.15)<sup>59</sup> and poverty<sup>60</sup> as

<sup>55</sup> Already Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 41–42, 117–18, recognized (following Wettstein) that the catalogues of official duties or lists of qualifications for officials in Titus 1:6, 7–8; 1 Tim 3:2–7, 8–9, 12 are modelled after corresponding ancient lists, for example, of a στρατηγός: Onosander, *De imperatoris officio*, Ch. 1, p. 11–22, ed. Hermann A. T. Köchly (Leipzig: Teubner 1860), 3–8.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Titus 3:1–2. Häfner and Schreiber, “Kontroverse Einstellungen,” 14–22, on the topics “explicit instruction on the external relationship” and “conceptual powers” (of such an external relationship) in the Pastoral Epistles. With good reason Häfner explains there on the one hand that the author of the Pastoral Epistles takes up “terms familiar from the environment,” “in order to use their positive connotation” (21), far from developing “a counter-program to the claim of the Roman emperor” (19); on the other hand it does not follow from it “that the relationship to the environment would be completely problem-free in the view of the Pastoral Epistles”, but corresponding 2 Tim 3:12 rather that “the faithful are under a certain pressure from outside (see also Titus 2:8)” (22). Cf. also Alfons Weiser, *Die gesellschaftliche Verantwortung der Christen nach den Pastoralbriefen*, Beiträge zur Friedensethik 18 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994).

<sup>57</sup> On the dating, cf. Horacio E. Lona, *Die ‘Wahre Lehre’ des Kelsos*, KFA suppl. 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005), 54–55; according to him, the work probably comes from Alexandria.

<sup>58</sup> Celsus, *AL* 1.4: “Their ethical teaching (ἠθικὸς τόπος) is common (κοινός) and in comparison with the other philosophers it is neither venerable nor a new knowledge” (translated from Lona, *Die ‘Wahre Lehre,’* 76); according to Celsus this is also true in comparison with Judaism, from which Christians have taken over important ideas, cf. 2.5b: “About the resurrection from the dead, about the judgment of God, and about the reward for the righteous and the punishment by fire for the wicked, nothing new about these topics was taught by Christians.” – Tertullian, *Apol.* 46.2–3: “But while the truth we hold is made clear to all, unbelief meanwhile, at the very time it is convinced of the worth of Christianity, which has now become well known for its benefits as well as from the intercourse of life, takes up the notion that it is not really a thing divine, but rather a kind of philosophy (*philosophiae genus*). *These are the very things, it says, the philosophers counsel and profess – innocence, justice, patience, sobriety, chastity.* Why, then, are we not permitted an equal liberty and impunity for our doctrines as they have, with whom, in respect of what we teach, we are compared? (trans. Sydney Thelwall.)

<sup>59</sup> As proof, Celsus quotes Plato, *Leges* 715e–716a: “The God who, as the time-honored word also says, holds the beginning and the end and the center of all things, walks in a straight path, making his path according to nature; and justice always follows him as avenger for those who deviate from the divine law. Whoever wants to be happy keeps to this law and follows it in *humility and modesty* (ταπεινὸς καὶ κεκοσμημένος).” Clement of Alexandria quotes this paragraph in *Stromata* 2.132.1 and explains that it corresponds exactly to the word of Jesus: “Whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (cf. Luke 14:11; 18:14; Matt 23:12). Celsus considers this to be a misunderstanding and contrasts the dignity of a man who “humbly” submits to the world order without hubris with the “unseemly” way in which someone humiliates himself “kneeling on the ground and throwing himself upside down, clothed in the garments of the wicked and covered with dust” (6.15b; Lona, *Die ‘Wahre Lehre,’* 330: this is to be understood as “the portrayal of a penitent”).

<sup>60</sup> Celsus, *AL* 6.16: “Jesus’ saying against the rich: *‘It is easier for a camel to go through the eye*

well as in the call to renounce violence (7.58b–c),<sup>61</sup> only to point out critically that the Christians had misunderstood Plato. Celsus's testimony is so revealing in our context because it demonstrates that it was certainly not the ethical maxims of the Christians that should have caused them distress. On the contrary, these reminded the philosopher of his own teacher, Plato.

One final remark: When the described topos of the "public perception" is used, it is always a matter of ethical *directives*, not yet – measured against a contemporary understanding – of "ethics" or "ethical *teaching*" (ἠθικὸς τόπος), which also discursively raises the potential of ethical generalization laid out in those directives.<sup>62</sup> But the course for a kind of "ethics" has been set, and ways of development can be imagined.

## 2. Contours of the Opponents' Internal Ethos

Our considerations began with the "refrain" so characteristic of the congregational instructions in Titus 2:1–15, that in all ethical action we should be mindful of the "public perception" in the polis. Whoever recognizes that this passage is designed in exact contrast to the preceding warning about the heterodox teachers in Titus 1:10–16,<sup>63</sup> which Titus 1:9 already announces in advance in the manner of a *propositio* with the *double* task of the episcopate, namely on the one hand "to instruct in sound doctrine" and on the other hand "to rebuke those

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*of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,* is nicely said by Plato, although Jesus falsified Plato's teaching, since Plato said, 'It is impossible for someone who is outstandingly good also to be outstandingly rich'" (*Leges* 743a). Clement of Alexandria discusses Jesus' saying (Matt 19:24) in *Quis div.* 2.2 and claims that the renunciation of riches is nothing new: "Many have done this before the Savior came down to earth, some to have time for philosophy and for the sake of dead wisdom; others out of foolish love of glory and vanity" (*Quis div.* 11.4). If he is concerned with "the continuity between antiquity and Christianity," Celsus conversely asserts "the dependence of the Christian" on the pagan side (Lona, *Die 'Wahre Lehre,'* 332).

<sup>61</sup> Celsus quotes the "commandment" of the Christians: "*If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other cheek*" and explains: "Venerable is also this commandment, and in former times it was formulated much better, which they (sc. the Christians) brought back into remembrance in all too coarse a form." Afterwards, he quotes as proof from Plato's *Crito*, among other works, the following dialogue: "In no way, therefore, must one do wrong. – Certainly not. – Therefore also not the one to whom injustice has been done may do injustice again, as most people believe, if one may not do injustice in any way. – It seems so. – But how? To do evil to the one from whom one has suffered evil, is that, as must people say, just or unjust? – Not at all. Repaying people with evil is no different from doing wrong."

<sup>62</sup> Middle Platonism advocates a tripartite division of philosophy into Metaphysics, Ethics, and Epistemology.

<sup>63</sup> Weiser, "Titus 2 als Gemeindepredigt," 405, on Titus 2:1: "The adversative δέ (v. 1) creates a contrast with all the statements in the section with the thoughts, speech, and behaviour of the false teachers marked in the previous section (Titus 1:10–16)."

who contradict it,<sup>64</sup> will not hesitate to evaluate the basic impulse of Titus 2:1–15 in an *anti-typical* manner with regard to the opponents. One cannot help but assume that, unlike the author of the three epistles, they were not concerned with an ethos capable of gaining a majority and being generalized, but cultivated instead an internal or group ethos with elitist features. Again, it is advisable to use the Epistle to Titus as a starting point to substantiate this assumption.

### 2.1 The Construct of the Opponents in Titus

The little that can be gathered from Titus 1:10–16, after removing the polemics about the doctrine and practice of the opponents, can be summed up in three points.

(1) In v. 11b the author of the letter explains: “*they* (sc. his opponents) *destroy entire houses*.” This means: In his opinion, they do not follow the usual socio-ethical ideas about the *oikos*, but “destroy” its recognized order, which means they revolutionize it by redefining the roles in the “house.” It is helpful to compare Titus 1:11 with 2 Tim 3:6, insofar as it explains what “destruction” means: If, according to tradition, women are obliged to “learn” what the *oikodespotēs* passes on to them in terms of conventional knowledge,<sup>65</sup> the opponents seem to find their clientele particularly among women whose intellectual emancipation the author characterizes as “constant learning” in a Sisyphean manner.<sup>66</sup> Plainly said, this means that they will never ever become διδάσκαλοι, which they claim to be.

Titus 1:11

<sup>11a</sup> They must shut up,

<sup>11b</sup> they are destroying *entire houses*,

by teaching out of shameful greed,

what they should not teach

2 Tim 3:5–7

<sup>5b</sup> Turn your back on these people!

<sup>6</sup> Because among them also include the people,  
*who creep into houses*

and there pull certain women over to their  
side, who are ruled by sin and are driven by  
desires of every kind,

<sup>7</sup> women who are constantly learning and who  
nevertheless never arrive at the truth.

Mention of “sneaking” into the houses in 2 Tim 3:6 is remarkable: “A polemic against missionary work” becomes clear, “which takes place in the seclusion of the houses (i. e., within the families) and is therefore beyond the control of the public sphere of the community or its leaders.”<sup>67</sup> This contradicts the basic

<sup>64</sup> On the rhetorical disposition of Titus, cf. Michael Theobald, “Titus: Introduction, Commentary,” in *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*, ed. José Enrique Aguilar Chiu et al., The Paulist Biblical Commentary (New York: Paulist, 2018), 1472–79.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 7.3–10.13.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Theobald, “Glauben statt Grübeln? Zum Anti-Intellektualismus der Pastoralbriefe,” *Early Christianity* (2014): 5–34.

<sup>67</sup> Oberlinner, *Der Titusbrief*, 37, with regard to Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 287: “The public, official preaching of the church is the place where one learns the truth.”

intention of the author, who is concerned with the transparency of the local *ekklesia* in the public sphere of the polis.

(2) Verse 15: “for the pure all things are pure” follows on specifically from Rom 14:20, where Paul uses the slogan “all things are pure” as an argument in the debate about the observance of food laws in Roman house churches.<sup>68</sup> The distinction between pure and impure may therefore also have been essential for the opponents of the Epistle to Titus, not in an ethical-moral sense, but rather in a ritual one. Whether their views can be conclusively explained by the purity law of the Mosaic law is rather unlikely, despite the allusion to Isa 29:13 LXX in the discussion of the ἐντολαὶ ἀνθρώπων (“commandments of men”)<sup>69</sup> in v. 14. The “commentary text” in 1 Tim 4:3: “They forbid marriage (and demand) abstinence from food which God has created to be consumed with thanksgiving” points to a rigorous asceticism which may have had additional sources of inspiration. Since there is some evidence that even the opponents of the author of the Pastoral Epistles – like the author himself – referred to Paul, their plea for celibacy will be linked to their fidelity to the apostle,<sup>70</sup> without their having declared their ideal to be law, as the author of the Pastoral Epistles claims.<sup>71</sup> In their table practices, they not only refused to eat meat but also to drink wine, and we are provided with no details about their motives for this. Whoever considers the central role that eating together played in the life of the ancient *oikos*, in the life of associations, in the cults of the polis and, accordingly, also in the *ekklesiai* will recognize a tendency towards dissociation in the practice of the opponents that may have been the norm for them. Their rigorous asceticism would have substantially promoted their group ethos.

(3) According to v. 16a, the opponents “claim to know God” (θεὸν ὁμολογοῦσιν εἰδέναι), which is countered by the clause in v. 16b: “but by their works they deny

<sup>68</sup> For evidence, cf. Theobald, *Israel-Vergessenheit*, 71–75.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Michael Theobald, “Von ‘menschlichen Satzungen’ (Jes 29,13) befreit. Eine nachpaulinische Tradition (Kol 2,20–23; Tit 1,14–15) im Licht von Jesus-Worten (Mk 7),” in *Bestimmte Freiheit, FS Christof Landmesser*, ed. Martin Bauspieß, Johannes U. Beck, and Friederike Portenhauser, ABIG 64 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2020), 95–118. – A Jewish background – whatever its exact definition – of at least a part of the opponents’ movement seems to be present; cf. Titus 1:14 (“Jewish μῦθοι”); 1 Tim 1:7: “They wish to be teachers of the law” (νομοδιδάσκαλοι). – See Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 85–119; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 46: “A Jewish basis for the opposition is thus beyond question. However, this can be only part of the story.”

<sup>70</sup> Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, “Engelsgleiche, Abstinente – und ein moderater Weintrinker. Asketische Sinnproduktion als literarische Technik im Lukasevangelium und im 1. Timotheusbrief,” in *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity. The Reception of New Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses. With an Introduction by Elizabeth A. Clark*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, NTOA/StUNT 101 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 21–68; idem, “Heilig an Leib und Geist. Sexualparänese und Anthropologie im Corpus Paulinum,” in *Sexualität*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., JBTh 33 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 107–41.

<sup>71</sup> 1 Tim 4:3: They “forbid” marrying (κωλύοντων); in Titus 1:14 he speaks of ἐντολαί, which they set up. Both could be polemics.

(ἀρνοῦνται) (him).” What is usually in opposition to each other – “confess” (ὁμολογεῖν) versus “deny” (ἀρνοῦσθαι)<sup>72</sup> – serves here to unmask the confession with the mouth by referring to the denial by means of action. In 2 Tim 3:5 the schema varies: “Although they maintain the outward appearance of piety, they deny (ἡρνημένοι) its power.” From this point of view, Titus 1:16 could be interpreted as a topos, which only polemically contains the discrepancy between word and deed. However, the antecedent clause is too specific not to be evaluated concretely as well. The opponents may indeed have claimed individual knowledge of God, by which they saw themselves as different from the ordinary baptized.<sup>73</sup> Also the warning about the “contradictions (ἀντιθέσεις)<sup>74</sup> of the falsely, so-called knowledge (τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως)” in 1 Tim 6:20 indicates that the opponents had the keyword “knowledge” of God in their mouths and made a claim which the author rejects with the epithet ψευδώνυμος.<sup>75</sup> Without being able to clarify the still controversial question here of whether the formulaic expression “knowing God” can be evaluated as an indication of a Gnostic or Gnosticizing character of the opponents’ doctrine or not,<sup>76</sup> the following should be noted: From the author’s perspective, this is an elitist “knowledge of God,” whose claim to validity fails because “real faith, which corresponds to piety ... [must] prove itself before the public forum, especially before the community.”<sup>77</sup>

Three aspects of the opponents’ “teaching” and way of life can be detected in Titus 1:10–16: *first*, an alternative socio-ethical understanding of the role of the *oikos*; *second*, ideas of purity that are reflected in the opponents’ table practices and its ideal of abstinence; and *third*, the claim to have a special “knowledge of God.” The first two aspects do not need to be considered innovations compared with a traditional Pauline Christianity, as the author of the Pastoral Epistles puts it, but can also be interpreted as preservation of old ideals, loaded however with new motivations. If the emancipated understanding of the role of women corresponds to the fact that they had significant leadership functions at the be-

<sup>72</sup> Matt 10:32–33; Luke 12:8–9; John 1:20.

<sup>73</sup> This corresponds to their claims to intellectual superiority, as countered by the author of the Pastoral Epistles, cf. Theobald, “Glauben.”

<sup>74</sup> A reference to the title of Marcion’s work “The Antitheses” should be excluded, cf. Theobald, “Glauben,” 6 (along with n. 4); the term is to be seen in the context of the broad vocabulary that serves the author of the Pastoral Epistles to vilify “intellectual ‘strife’ as a vice”; cf. Theobald, “Glauben,” 16–19.

<sup>75</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1097: “falsely bearing a name, falsely called.”

<sup>76</sup> Andreas Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum. Das Bild des Apostels und die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion*, BHT 58 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 135: The expression γνώσις “at this point probably does not at all mean ‘gnosis’ in the sense of the history of religions; it is more probable that γνώσις here as in all other places in the New Testament simply means ‘knowledge’ that the author of 1 Timothy thus polemizes against the anti-Christian ‘contradictions’ of those who claim to possess γνώσις.”

<sup>77</sup> Oberlinner, *Der Titusbrief*, 48.

ginning of the Pauline mission, then the opponents' ideal of abstinence may be interpreted as loyalty to the lifestyle of the apostle, who himself declared that he wished "all men were unmarried" as he was (1 Cor 7:7). Do the three epistles reveal an integral that holds together the aspects mentioned and possibly others, a "theological middle" from which they can be understood? The thesis in 2 Tim 2:18, which is put into the mouth of Hymenaeus and Philetus, two opponents mentioned by name, has every chance of being the sought integral.<sup>78</sup>

## 2.2 "The resurrection has already taken place" (2 Tim 2:18). "The Theological Middle" of the Opponents' Doctrine (Lorenz Oberlinner)

Just as Titus 1:16 introduces the slogan "We know God" as the self-testimony of the opponents, so too the thesis that "the resurrection has already taken place" in 2 Tim 2:18. This assertion is made by two false teachers, who are mentioned by name: Hymenaeus and Philetus. Although these two were "probably *neither* real *contemporaries* of the sender and the addressees *nor real figures of the past*," individuals "who would have played a negative role in the missionary history of the community,"<sup>79</sup> the "erroneous assertion ... reproduced in the form of a short report ... [was] probably a real position and was not merely imputed to the opponents."<sup>80</sup> The fact that it is only mentioned in 2 Timothy (i. e., the last epistle of the trilogy) is connected with its overall organization in terms of content, which (like its spatial construct) develops according to plan: If the perspective of Titus is oriented in its theological argumentation towards *baptism*,<sup>81</sup> and that of 1 Timothy towards the repeated gathering of the *ekklesia* for the *liturgical*

<sup>78</sup> Primarily following Oberlinner, *Der Titusbrief*, 54, who finds that "the theological center of the 'false doctrine'" in the "confession of his opponents [quoted in 2 Tim 2:18 is] that the resurrection has already happened." This is the "'core proposition' at the center of the disagreements," following Egbert Schlarb, *Die gesunde Lehre. Häresie und Wahrheit im Spiegel der Pastoralbriefe*, MThSt 29 (Marburg: Elwert, 1990), 93 and with reference to Philip H. Towner, "Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 95–124, here 104: "At the center of the false teachers' gnosis was the belief that the resurrection of believers had already occurred (2 Tim 2:18)"; Hermann von Lips, *Glaube, Gemeinde, Amt. Zum Verständnis der Ordination in den Pastoralbriefen*, FRLANT 122 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 153: "The fundamental soteriological view of the heretics [is] a spiritualized belief in the resurrection."

<sup>79</sup> Weiser, *Der zweite Brief an Timotheus*, 195: There is "a concretizing stylistic device corresponding to pseudepigraphy with the tendency to illustrate problems, processes, and developments through personalization."

<sup>80</sup> Weiser, *Der zweite Brief an Timotheus*, 195: A "substantive reproduction of their heresy" was "relatively rare" in the Pastoral Epistles. Apart from Titus 1:16a and 2 Tim 2:18, there seem to be no other examples.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Titus 3:4–7; on this, see Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles*, HUT 22 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 185: "This doctrinal proposition unites the three concepts of baptism, the spirit, and regeneration."

*meal*,<sup>82</sup> 2 Timothy, which apart from elements of the ancient letter of friendship shows features of a literary testament, focuses above all on *eschatological* topics. According to the fictitious situation of the letter – “Paul” awaits his martyrdom after his Roman trial – and in keeping with the final position of the letter in the trilogy, the *resurrection message* as the “epitome of the gospel”<sup>83</sup> is given special attention. The polemical rejection of the opponents’ thesis that the resurrection has already taken place suggests itself directly in this context. The enthusiastic interpretation of one’s existence in faith according to the slogan that the resurrection had already taken place in a spiritual, individualized sense collided with the conviction that at the end of times death would be “destroyed” and believers would be given “imperishability” (2 Tim 1:10). This slogan refers to the “theological middle” of the opponents’ positions insofar as the inherent devaluation of corporeality explains both the specific ideas of purity of the opponents and the special “knowledge of God” they claimed. It is not without reason that the author sees in the opponents’ renunciation of marriage and food a disregard for creation and emphasizes that “everything that God has created is good and nothing is reprehensible if it is enjoyed with thanksgiving. It is sanctified by God’s word and by prayer” (1 Tim 4:4–5).

### 2.3 Summary

If the opponents saw in the community of believers an *enclave of heaven*, a place where the resurrection of the dead, as promised in the Jewish Scriptures, is already a reality here on earth, then this also had ethical implications. A life like the “angels” had to weld together the community of the redeemed and demanded a corresponding internal ethos of mutual love, respect, and appreciation with the flip-side that the references to the environment were declared irrelevant for one’s own existence in faith, if not entirely faded out. Unfortunately, the Pastoral Epistles do not offer any further pointers to the ethical views of the opponents

<sup>82</sup> Cf. 1 Tim 2:1–7 (*oratio universalis*); 2:8 (the men’s attitude of prayer); 1 Tim 3:1–7/8–13 (*Episkopos* – *Diakonois*: implicit orientation towards the congregational assembly: leadership and social services); 1 Tim 4:3–4: rejection of ascetic demands with reference to the Eucharist or prayers at mealtime; 1 Tim 4:13: Scripture reading and instruction (in the congregational assembly).

<sup>83</sup> Weiser, *Der zweite Brief an Timotheus*, 196. Additionally, reference is made to 2 Tim 1:10–12, 18; 2:5–6, 8–13, the *inclusio* in 2 Tim 4:1 (“I charge you by God and by Christ Jesus, the coming judge of the living and the dead, and by his appearing and by his kingdom”) and 2 Tim 4:8 (“already now the wreath of righteousness is ready, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, but not only to me, but to all who long for his appearance”), as well as to 2 Tim 4:18, but also to the motif of the future divine “retribution” (2 Tim 4:14). – The *Corpus Pastorale* speaks of “that day,” the future judgment, only in 2 Timothy; cf. the formulaic expression in 2 Tim 1:12 (εις εκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν), 2 Tim 1:18 (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ), and 2 Tim 4:8 (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ). It is not at all a coincidence that 2 Tim 3:1 speaks of “the last days” (ἐν ἔσχάταις ἡμέραις) (the variant in 1 Tim 4:1 is: ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς).

beyond what has been mentioned – how could they when they defame the opponents as “liars” (Titus 1:12), contentious (Titus 3:9), and “blasphemers” (1 Tim 1:20). Those who wish to have an approximate picture of their ethical ideas should refer to the Acts of Paul, which paints a picture of the apostle that in some ways resembles that of the opponents of the Pastoral Epistles.<sup>84</sup> The homily that Paul preaches in the house of Onesiphorus is significant:<sup>85</sup> It adapts the Matthean Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, but skips over the blessing on the peacemakers in this world, only to preserve the blessing for the merciful. “Paul” opens the series with the beatitude of those who are pure of heart, and the series as a whole serves his praise of ἐγκράτεια, abstinence. Among the new formations, there are two that are typical of the internal ethos of the groups behind the Acts: “Blessed are those who have renounced this world, for they will be pleasing to God,” and “blessed are those who have forsaken the worldly nature for the love of God, for they will judge angels and be blessed at the right hand of the Father.”

### 3. Group and Cross-Group Ethos. A Small Typology as a Conclusion

After having referred to the Acts of Paul, it would usually now be the appropriate time to attempt to locate the opposing positions theologically and historically in the second century with its different currents.<sup>86</sup> Instead, to illustrate the leading question of this essay – “internal ethos or ethos before the public forum” – we will be content to present the corresponding early Christian models in skeletal form and finally ask what significance the Pastoral Epistles have, ethically speaking, for the later history of theology.

(1) *Jesus* represents a *delimitation of all group ethics* when he programmatically calls for “loving one’s enemies” and justifies this with the action of the Creator, who indiscriminately permits *every* human being, good or bad, just or unjust, to have a share in the foundational conditions for life: sun and rain (Matt 5:44–45; cf. Luke 6:35).<sup>87</sup> Jesus deliberately sets himself apart from all group egoism: To greet only one’s own comrades and to treat them well is a behavior that

<sup>84</sup> Gerd Häfner, “Die Gegner in den Pastoralbriefen und die Paulusakten,” ZNW 92 (2001): 64–77; cf. Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983).

<sup>85</sup> Acts of Paul and Thecla 5–6 (Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *Apostolisches, Apokalypsen und Verwandtes*, vol. 2 of *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, 6th ed. [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997], 216–17).

<sup>86</sup> Weiser, *Der zweite Brief an Timotheus*, 210–21, does this in a convincing way for the core proposition in 2 Tim 2:18, that the resurrection has already taken place.

<sup>87</sup> Becker, “Feindesliebe,” 384: “Love imitates God, as he always creates new possibilities for living everywhere within creation. Love never asks who the other person is, but what he can become on the basis of the possibilities granted him.”

characterizes professional groups like the hated “publicans” (Matt 5:46), but it is also common practice in criminal circles (among “sinners”; Luke 6:33). An exaggerated group ethos betrays, for example, the Essene sectarian scroll when it calls the community “to love all the sons of light ... but hate all the sons of darkness” (1QS I 9–10).<sup>88</sup> When Jesus exhorts to go beyond *all* boundaries, including *religious* ones (Luke 10:29–37), this necessarily follows from his message of the accommodating and unconditional goodness of God.

(2) The letters of *Paul* offer a differentiated picture. On the one hand, the apostle, in his role as a letter writer to the churches he founded, is primarily interested in supporting them as fraternal groups in their ethical endeavors for “sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3) in a motivating way, in accordance with their calling by God. What “brotherly love” (φιλαδελφία) is, he concretizes with instructions for living together in the church (1 Thess 4:3b–6). The reason and the driving force of this “brotherly love” is the being gifted of the believers with the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 4:8). Love is the outflow of their existence renewed by God’s Spirit. In addition to pneumatological reasons, there are also christological reasons for the new nature of Christians, which is expressed in the practice of love. So it is not surprising that Paul uses the semantic field of love (ἀγάπη, ἀγαπᾶν), with one exception (1 Thess 3:12), only for the internal references of the community, not for its external environment, and nowhere extends it to “love of enemies.”

On the other hand (as mentioned at the beginning) he does not hide the communities’ external relations. Characteristic is the paraenesis in Rom 12:9–21, which in its first part deals with the internal relationships (v. 9–16), and beginning in verse 17 (cf. also v. 14) deals with external relationships, the latter with an astonishing sense of reality: “Do not repay evil with evil! Be careful to do good to all people! *As far as it is possible*, keep peace with *all people!*” (v. 17–18). There are limits to one’s ability and desire to make peace. Knowing that prevents disappointment. Only *one’s own* abilities can be assessed. The progression of the directives reveals their *universal*, apocalyptic horizon, which puts a stop to an absolutization of a group ethos: “Do not retaliate, beloved, but leave room for the judgment of God’s wrath, for it is written, ‘Retribution is mine and I will repay,’ says the Lord. Instead, ‘if your enemy is hungry, give him food; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; if you do so, you gather coals of fire upon his head’” (v. 19–20). God is the Lord of history, to whom *all* must answer, not only believers. The knowledge of a “good” that is implanted in all human beings

<sup>88</sup> Cf. also 1QS II 24–26: “All are to be in the fellowship of truth, good humility, merciful love, and righteous thought, [on]e against another in holy counsel and as sons of the eternal assembly. But anyone who refuses to enter [into the covenant of God] and to walk in the hardness of his heart shall not [enter into the com]munity of his ...” The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* offers another example: Jürgen Becker, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen*, AGSU 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

(cf. Rom 2:12–16), even those who do not know God’s will from his Torah, offers the potential of a *universally valid theological ethics*, to which Paul in the Epistle to the Romans – a “theology in letter form” – provides the decisive systematic insights.<sup>89</sup> Though, it was not his purpose to work it out as such.

(3) Compared to Paul, the *Corpus Iohanneum*, as far as can be seen, cultivates a typical *internal ethos*. Its concise expression is found in the “new commandment” of love: “Love one another! As I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples: if you love one another” (John 13:34–35).<sup>90</sup> Ethical instructions for the *external relationships* of the community are sought in vain.<sup>91</sup> The reason for this is that in John’s works, the “world” is the sphere far away from God, from which the scattered chosen ones are gathered into the salvific sphere of the church.<sup>92</sup> Like Paul, the author of the Fourth Gospel advocates a theology of election, but unlike him, the apocalyptic universal historical perspective is missing. The expectation that God will assume his rule over the whole world at the end of time no longer leads at the forefront, but rather the conviction that here and now the chosen ones will be gathered into the vine of Jesus, which means life, and in death will be “drawn” into eternal life beyond (John 12:32). To speak of the “*denunciation* of an external relationship defined by the concept of love”<sup>93</sup> is not the point. For if “*all*” people are “to recognize” by the fraternal love practiced in the community that these are *Jesus’ disciples*,<sup>94</sup> the reference to the outside world is not cut off, but the circumstances are only reversed: “Mission,” understood in the Johannine sense, is not centrifugal,<sup>95</sup> but centripetal, conceived as a gathering of the elect in the salvific sphere of Christ, who are attracted by the ethos of love lived out in the church.<sup>96</sup> The ethos in this

<sup>89</sup> If anywhere in the New Testament, it is Romans which (in continuation of Galatians) offers basic lines for theological ethics. In the horizon of ancient, systematic sketches of ethics, an idiosyncratic and new form of “theological ethics” makes itself known in connection with the Jewish-Hellenistic tradition.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. John 15:9–11, 12–17; 1 John 2:9–11; 3:11–24; 4:7–16. 1 John offers approaches to a socio-ethical concretion of the internal ethos when 3:17 demands sharing the goods of this world with the “brother” in need; cf. William R. G. Loader, “What Happened to ‘Good News for the Poor’ in the Johannine Tradition?” in *Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens*, vol. 3 of *John, Jesus, and History*, ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, ECL 18 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 469–80.

<sup>91</sup> On the contrary, cf. 1 John 2:15–17.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. John 11:52; also 1:11–12; 10:14–15; 17:1–26, among other passages. John 3:16 (“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that *whoever believes in him* will not perish, but have eternal life”) corresponds to this because it is about those in the world *who believe in him* who are to be saved.

<sup>93</sup> Becker, “Feindesliebe,” 393 (emphasis mine).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. also John 17:21–23.

<sup>95</sup> Matthew 28:16–20: “Therefore, go and make all the nations mine disciples ....”

<sup>96</sup> This presupposes the awareness of being in the *public eye* as a Christian community and being perceived by it, or the intention to bear witness *in public*. On the Johannine understanding of mission, cf. Michael Theobald, “‘Wie mich der Vater gesandt hat, so sende ich euch’ (Joh

salvific sphere is *christologically* based (“as I have loved you, you also should love one another”). The gospel itself, through its characters, offers the readers *narrative*<sup>97</sup> plot models<sup>98</sup> and, with them, strengthens the group ethos, but does not go beyond it in the sense of a universalization of the values conveyed.<sup>99</sup>

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20,21). Missionarische Gestalten im Johannesevangelium,” in *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, WUNT 267 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 472–89, in particular 486–89 (“Mission im Johannesevangelium”).

<sup>97</sup> Speaking along with others of a “narrative ethics” for the Gospel of John is Ruben Zimmermann, “Narrative Ethik im Johannesevangelium am Beispiel der Lazarus-Perikope Joh 11,” in *Narrativität und Theologie im Johannesevangelium*, ed. Jörg Frey and Uta Poplutz, BThSt 130 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2012), 133–70. What such a system is capable of was already developed in 1976 under the use of this terminology by Dietmar Mieth, *Dichtung, Glaube und Moral*, TTS 7 (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1976), on the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Straßburg. Zimmermann presents the various concepts that have been developed in recent times within the humanities and social sciences (Zimmermann, “Narrative Ethik,” 146–55 [146 n. 51: literature]) and, in discussion with the efficacious contribution of Wayne A. Meeks, “The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 317–26, using the example of John 11, offers a characteristic attempt to adapt the concept to the Gospel of John. On John 11 as a narrative guide for dealing with death, cf. Michael Theobald, “Trauer um Lazarus. Womit die Juden Martha und Maria zu trösten suchten,” *TTZ* 114 (2005): 243–56 (also in *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, WUNT 267 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010], 429–42).

<sup>98</sup> John the Baptist (John 1) and the blind man who was healed by Jesus (John 9) are such “models of action” when they illustrate what *παρρησία* = “frankness” means (John 1:20), as Jesus himself exemplifies “frankness” in his speech and actions (John 7:4, 13, 26; 10:24; 11:14, 54; 16:25, 29); cf. William Klassen, “Parrhesia in the Johannine Corpus,” in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech. Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, NovTSup 82 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 227–54; Stanley B. Marrow, “Parrhēsia and the New Testament,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 431–46; Michael Labahn, “Der Weg eines Namenlosen – vom Hilfflosen zum Vorbild (Joh 9). Ansätze zu einer narrativen Ethik der sozialen Verantwortung im vierten Evangelium,” in *Die bleibende Gegenwart des Evangeliums, FS O. Merk*, ed. Roland Gebauer and Martin Meiser (Marburg: Elwert, 2003), 63–80; idem, “Die parrhesia des Gottessohnes. Theologische Hermeneutik und philosophisches Selbstverständnis,” in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums. Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, ed. Jörg Frey and Udo Schnelle, WUNT 175 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 321–64.

<sup>99</sup> But this is what Zimmermann, “Narrative Ethik,” 168–69 means (under the heading: “Universal ethics of friendship instead of conventional ethics”): John 11 (like the Gospel as a whole!) “does not seek to establish an internal ethic.” “If, according to the ancient understanding, open, free speech belonged to the special characteristics of trusted friends, it is extended to the whole world in John’s Gospel. Jesus works and speaks publicly to the whole world (ἐν ὅλῳ παρρησίᾳ λελάληκα τῷ κόσμῳ, cf. John 16:25). In this way, John expands the ideal of friendship in a universal sense” (emphasis mine). This does not seem to me to be the case, as the Johannine reception of the *topoi* of Greek-Hellenistic *ethics of friendship* especially in John 15:13–15 (cf. 3:29; 11:11; 3 John 15), but also in John 17:6, 9–10 demonstrates: “I have revealed your name to the people you gave me out of the world. For them I pray; I do not pray for the world, but for all whom you have given me, for they are yours. All that is mine is yours, and all that is yours is mine. In them I am glorified.” The same could be seen in the theme of *hospitality*: Michael Theobald, “Gastfreundschaft im Corpus Iohanneum. Zur religiösen Transformation eines kulturellen Grundcodes der Antike,” in *Narrativität*, ed. Frey and Poplutz, 171–216; cf. idem, “Freundschaft,” *LTK*, 3rd ed., vol. 4 (1995), 132–33; Hans-Josef Klauck, “Kirche als Freundesgemeinschaft. Auf Spurensuche

(4) The *opponents in the Pastoral Epistles* cultivated, as far as can be seen, an *exaggerated group ethos*. According to the author's attempts at demarcation, they belonged to the communities he wanted to influence with his letters, but they were probably characterized by an elitist consciousness that clearly set them apart from other Christians who sought to live their lives within the familiar structures of marriage and the *oikos*. The *author of the Pastoral Epistles* sets strong counterpoints to this when he pleads with his ethical directives and ideas of order to orient oneself on the socio-ethically recognized standards of the polis<sup>100</sup> in order to have a protreptic effect.<sup>101</sup> With this he links up with Paul<sup>102</sup> and goes further. Paul explains in 1 Thess 5:21–22: "Examine all things and hold fast to the good! Avoid evil in every form" and in Phil 4:8: "Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovable, appealing, virtuous, praiseworthy, consider these things!" The intention is expressed programmatically here "to make oneself understood with-in a general and *non-Christian ethical discussion*." Early Christian ethos therefore "avoided the ghetto of special ethics for a small group and challenged others – if they also wanted to serve the good – to engage in such discussion."<sup>103</sup>

The latter has not yet taken place in the *inwardly* directed Pastoral Epistles, but they mark an important stage in the development and reflection of the Christian ethos, which finally leads to the above-mentioned offer of conversation to contemporaries. Such a dialog begins in the apologies of Justin, which, in response to contemporary ethics, offer a fully reflected elaboration of his ethos in light of Jesus' instructions (1 *Apol.* 15–17).<sup>104</sup> In the Alexandrian School of Clement and Origen, with its open atmosphere, dialog with the educated was cultivated. The seed which the author of the Pastoral Epistles – not his opponents – had sown a few decades earlier was sprouting.

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im Neuen Testament," in *Gemeinde zwischen Haus und Stadt. Kirche bei Paulus* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1992), 95–123.

<sup>100</sup> Weiser, "Titus 2 als Gemeindepapir," 399, rightly remarks with regard to economics that the author of the Pastoral Epistles "did *not* receive *the* or *any* socio-ethical system of order from antiquity, but rather a conscious position was taken in favor of a 'humanizing middle position,' between patriarchalism and emancipation" (following Klaus Thraede, "Zum historischen Hintergrund der 'Haustafeln' des NT," in *Pietas, FS Bernhard Kötting*, ed. Ernst Dassmann and Karl Suso Frank, JAC suppl. 8 [Münster: Aschendorff, 1980], 359–68, here 364–65).

<sup>101</sup> Cf. above at n. 23.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. also Col 4:5a: "Walk in wisdom towards those outside." Similarly Eph 5:15.

<sup>103</sup> Becker, "Feindesliebe," 391.

<sup>104</sup> Ulrich, *Justin*, 79–83; idem, "Ethik als Ausweis christlicher Identität bei Justin Martyr," *ZEE* 50 (2006): 21–28; cf. also Uwe Kühneweg, "Die griechischen Apologeten und die Ethik," *VC* 42 (1988): 112–20.