CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE VIRTUS FEMINARUM IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:9–15*

NT scholarship has not been kind to the Pastoral Epistles. Critics have denied the author any originality of thought, alleged that he had only a superficial knowledge of traditions he derived from Judaism, Christianity, and paganism (especially popular philosophy), and judged him incapable of constructing a coherent system of his own.¹ However, of late some scholars have argued in detail that the author was more original and consistent in his thinking than has been thought,² and others have in general expressed a more favorable assessment of what he achieved.³ In a couple of recent studies, I have proposed that the author was more knowledgeable of contemporary philosophy than he has been thought to be, and that he adapted the philosophic paraenetic style to suit his own purpose.⁴ Situating the Pastoral Epistles more firmly in their intellectual context considerably

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² E.g., Karoline Läger, Die Christologie der Pastoralbriefe (HThSt 12; Münster: Lit, 1996); Andrew Y. Lau, Manifest in the Flesh: The Epiphany Christology in the Pastoral Epistles (WUNT 2.86; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996).

³ E.g., Raymond F. Collins, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); Carl R. Holladay, Critical Introduction to the New Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 436–441. If the letters are examined individually rather than as a collection, and each is understood in terms of the circumstances reflected in each individual letter, greater coherence in the theology of each letter is likely to be discovered. For viewing the letters thus, see especially the work of Luke Timothy Johnson, e.g., The First and Second Letters to Timothy (AB 35A; New York: Doubleday, 2001). A growing tendency to view the letters in this way is described well by Jens Herzer in a review article, “Abschied vom Konsens? Die Pseudepigraphie der Pastoralbriefe als Herausforderung an die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft,” TLZ 129 (2004): 1267–1282.

illuminates the letters, which is not to claim, however, that their theological coherence has become crystal clear in the process.

Having recently discussed aspects of the letters’ theology and style, in this paper I wish to focus on 1 Tim 2:9–15, which deals with ethics. It has been argued forcefully by some commentators that this section of text does not cohere literally, but, including v. 8, is a cluster of five distinct pieces, a contention that has been countered by others on both literary and thematic grounds. Most commentators think that 2:8–15, although it is a new section, is connected to 2:1–7, even if only loosely. The main reasons for these assessments are that the grammar is awkward, making for disjointed statements, and a number of traditions are employed without being developed in this context or shown to cohere with each other. In contrast, attempts have been made to identify themes that unite the entire chapter, such as worship or mission, or to view it in light of classifications of the larger section, 2:1–3:13, such as the first church order, or a scheme of domestic duties.

It is my contention in this paper that there is greater literary coherence to 2:9–15 than has been recognized, and that popular philosophical discussions of σωφροσύνη suggest that the text should be viewed within that rubric. The paper is a prolegomenon to exegesis of the passage.

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7 See the discussion in Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 83–85.
8 More specifically, prayer: I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 415–416, but prayer associated with propagation of the gospel. Despite the confusion he observes in the “cluster,” Miller, *Composite Documents*, 70, thinks that the catchword is προσεύχεσθαι (v. 8), and that the general issue addressed is “Directions for Public Worship.” Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, 107–108, thinks that worship in the larger context of 2:1–3:13 has to do with conduct in the household of God.