The Procession Honoring Artemis in *Ephesiaca*, I.Eph 27, and Implications for Reading 1 Timothy

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This study brings into view an ancient Greek prose narrative text known as *Ephesiaca* or *Anthia and Habrocomes* by Xenophon of Ephesus. Hesychius of Miletus, a fifth/sixth century CE historian, labels him as an historiographer.[1] Antonio Cocchi published the *editio princeps* (the first printed edition) of *Ephesiaca* in 1726. Classical scholars dated it to the second or third century CE.

In 1995, James O'Sullivan made a solid argument to date *Ephesiaca* to approximately 50 CE.[2] This timeline matches the historical work of Paul in Ephesus and the location where he ordered Timothy to remain (1 Timothy 1:3). The opening scene of *Ephesiaca* features a procession honoring Artemis. When examined alongside the largest extant epigraphic display of Roman Ephesus—the Gaius Vibius Salutaris inscription (I.Eph 27)—consistent terms and themes appear.[3]

This study evaluates how this little-known literary and often-overlooked epigraphic evidence can help us in reading 1 Timothy. This paper undertakes fresh research in four parts: (1) the procession honoring Artemis in *Ephesiaca*, (2) the procession honoring Artemis in I.Eph 27, (3) comparative analysis and implications for reading 1 Timothy, and (4) conclusion.

Part 1: The Procession Honoring Artemis in *Ephesiaca*

To envision the local environment of Ephesus in the first century CE, this study begins by exploring the historical value and descriptive input of *Ephesiaca*. The narrative records the trials and adventures of two wealthy citizens, Anthia and Habrocomes. The early classification of *Ephesiaca* by classical scholars placed it within the genre of the ancient Greek novel or romance.[4]

B.P. Reardon describes *Ephesiaca* as "a very simple specimen of the genre, an early and unsophisticated form of romance... It contains all the staple ingredients: a handsome hero and a beautiful heroine, an immediate and passionate love, separation, travel in exotic lands, shipwrecks, pirates, robbers, apparent death, threats to chastity, and ultimate reunion."[5]

Reinhold Merkelbach offers a different classification. "*Ephesiaca* is not merely an entertaining romance; it is a *hieros logos* [sacred writing] of the mystery cult, an allegorical narrative through which the initiate experiences the mystical suffering, wandering, and ultimate deliverance under the protection of the divinity."[6] In his view, *Ephesiaca* supplies key clues about the Artemis cult.

Jeffrey Henderson, in his translation for the Loeb Classical Library, notes that while earlier classical scholarship saw the text as a late compilation, its specific formulaic phrases point to an authentic early text.[7] With James O'Sullivan, Henderson places the story in the mid-first century CE, sharing a social setting with Luke's account of the Ephesian riot in Acts 19.[8]

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[1] For the original Greek testimony, see: (*TLG*) Xenophon Scr. Erot., Testimonion, 0641.002; F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (FGrH) #419 (Leiden: Brill, 1969).
[2] James O'Sullivan, *Xenophon of Ephesus: His Compositional Technique and the Birth of the Novel* (UaLG 44; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 9.
[3] Gary G. Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy: Fresh Insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus* (BBRS 11; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 33.
[4] Erwin Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1876), 381; and, B. P. Reardon, *The Form of Greek Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 156.
[5] B. P. Reardon, ed., *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 125.
[6] Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich: Beck, 1962), 91–94.
[7] Jeffrey Henderson, ed. and trans., *Daphnis and Chloe by Longus; Anthia and Habrocomes by Xenophon of Ephesus* (LCL 69; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 208.
[8] Henderson, *Anthia and Habrocomes*, 203

David Konstan emphasizes the geographic accuracy and religious descriptions in *Ephesiaca*.[9] Unlike other novelists who wrote about the classical golden era, Xenophon of Ephesus sets his story inside the real operational systems of Roman Asia, providing a window into contemporary popular religious attitudes, illustrating how elite pride and civic honor linked to Artemis.

This background shows the value of the historical testimony of *Ephesiaca*. Now we turn to the text. The opening movement functions as a screenplay of the annual festival of Artemis including the *pompe* (procession). Xenophon of Ephesus presents the public ritual procession or *pompe* as the space where elite lineage, physical beauty, and material luxury met under civic authority:

> The local festival of Artemis was in progress, with its procession from the city to the temple nearly a mile away. All the local girls had to march in procession, richly dressed, as well as all the young men of Habrocomes' age—he was around sixteen, already a member of the Ephebes, and took first place in the procession. There was a great crowd of Ephesians and visitors alike to see the festival, for it was the custom at this festival to find husbands for the girls and wives for the young men. So the procession filed past—first the sacred objects, the torches, the baskets, and the incense; then horses, dogs, hunting equipment . . . some for war, some for peace. And each of the girls was dressed as if to receive a lover. Anthia led the line of girls; she was the daughter of Megamedes and Euippe, both of Ephesus. Anthia's beauty was an object of wonder, far surpassing the other girls'. She was fourteen; her beauty was burgeoning, still more enhanced by the adornment of her dress. Her hair was golden—a little of it plaited, but most hanging loose and blowing in the wind. Her eyes were quick; she had the bright glance of a young girl, and yet the austere look of a virgin. She wore a purple tunic down to the knee, fastened with a girdle and falling loose over her arms, with a fawnskin over it, a quiver attached, and arrows for weapons; she carried javelins and was followed by dogs. Often as they saw her in the sacred enclosure the Ephesians would worship her as Artemis (*Ephesiaca* 1.2.2–7).[10]

The *pompe* route moved from the civic center to the temple, drawing a sacred boundary line that linked the urban core to the source of its monetary and religious life, the Artemisium. Xenophon of Ephesus portrays two groups leading the way: the *parthenoi* (unmarried young women) and the *epheboi* (young elite males). The text portrays them as extravagantly adorned with markers of elite status: gold, purple, and pearls on the necks and plaited in the hair of the women.

Anthia, as the daughter of the prominent citizens Megamedes and Euippe, leads the procession. Xenophon of Ephesus labels Megamedes and Euippe as *epichorioi* (local natives) or part of the indigenous Ephesian aristocracy. As Anthia processes, the crowd falls down in worship, conflating her adornment and material luxury as the appearance of the goddess herself.[11] Georges Dalmeyda proclaims, "*Anthia représente, en effet, Artémis!*"[12] Tomas Hägg reports that Anthia's description matches extant statuettes of Artemis dated to the first century CE.[13]

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[9] David Konstan, "Xenophon of Ephesus: Eros and Narrative in the Novel," in *Greek Fiction: The Greek Novel in Context* (ed. J. R. Morgan and Richard Stoneman; New York: Routledge, 1994), 49-51.
[10] This excerpt comes from Graham Anderson, "Xenophon of Ephesus: An Ephesian Tale," in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (ed. B. P. Reardon; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 125–69, based on: Georges Dalmeyda, ed., *Xénophon d'Éphèse: Les Ephésiaques* (Paris: Budé, 1926); and, A. D. Papanikolaou, ed., *Xenophon Ephesius: Ephesiacorum libri V* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1973).
[11] Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus,* 89–114, notes that Anthia appears to model the prohibited adornment in 1 Timothy 2:9–10.
[12] Dalmeyda, *Xénophon d'Éphèse*, 5.
[13] Tomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 27.

To better understand the procession, we do well to turn to ritual theorists who examine the socio-political mechanics of ancient parades. Fritz Graf demonstrates that the civic procession was an active instrument of social stratification and civic initialization.[14] Graf writes that the *pompe* served as a visual manifestation of the city's hierarchy, where the distribution of roles within the parade directly correlated to the distribution of power and honor within the state.[15]

In the case of the Artemis procession, the public walk of the *parthenoi* and *epheboi* acted as a highly formal pre-marital sorting mechanism. By having the young elites process, the ruling families displayed their wealth, established alliances, and demonstrated their ancestral right to rule. The presence of purple, gold, and pearls on the bodies of the processing youth was not a matter of random personal vanity; it was a deeply controlled performance of civic authority.

Froma Zeitlin notes that the female body in public festivals functioned as a canvas for family capital.[16] The *parthenoi* dressed in the wealth of their lineage, and their public march was designed to provoke a response from onlookers. The display intended to stimulate civic pride, reinforce the stability of the elite class, and honor the goddess who protected their commercial enterprises. Piety in this literary and historical framework was entirely external. It was bound up with the loud, costly, visible performance of material luxury on the streets of the metropolis.

Xenophon of Ephesus continues the procession description in *Ephesiaca* 1.3, highlighting the community involvement.[17] The text says the entire city, including foreign travelers and locals, crowded the streets to watch. Onlookers shouted praises, threw flowers, and evaluated the appearance and garments of the participants. This feedback served as an exchange mechanism where the public traded praise and prestige for the visual luxury provided by the elite families.

Guy MacLean Rogers sees this procession as linked to the cycles of life, specifically marriage and reproduction under the protection of Artemis, who as goddess of childbirth, required young women to offer their childhood garments and locks of hair at her temple before marriage.[18] Dressed in gold and pearls, Anthia appears as a ready, fertile citizen. Xenophon of Ephesus portrays the elite family leading the way in complying with the religious rules of the city.

The clothing details provided by Xenophon of Ephesus match what ancient historians know about luxury rules in Asia Minor. Draping pearls (*margaritai*) around the neck displayed wealth. Dressing a young woman in pearls and gold for a walk along a dusty road showed that the family possessed vast surplus wealth. The sumptuous clothing (*himatismos polyteles*) worn by Anthia displayed the family power and made lower-class citizens aware of their lower position.

The Ephesian culture in the first century CE defined religious piety through public, external participation in processions like the one recounted in *Ephesiaca*. In this ritual, the elite class combined material wealth, visual display, and civic power into a single system of control. And, to preserve social and religious rules like the procession recounted in *Ephesiaca*, the people in power inscribed the detailed instructions for observing such customs in stone as law.

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[14] Fritz Graf, "The Ritual Dynamics of Customary Processions," in *Practitioners of the Divine* (ed. Beate Dignas and Kai Trampedach; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 55.
[15] Graf, "The Ritual Dynamics," 58.
[16] Froma I. Zeitlin, "The Politics of Adornment in Greek Ritual Performances," in *The Gender of Ritual* (London: Routledge, 2001), 114.
[17] Henderson, *Anthia and Habrocomes*, 216.
[18] Rogers, *The Mysteries of Artemis of Ephesos* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 122. For an explanation of 1 Timothy 2:15 in light of the social and cultural realities at play, see Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus,* 92–93.

Part 2: The Procession Honoring Artemis in I.Eph 27

This civic ritual system was set in stone at the start of the second century (104 CE) to expand the processions observed in Ephesus throughout the first century CE. Modern scholarship refers to it as the Gaius Vibius Salutaris inscription or I.Eph 27.[19] I.Eph 27 documents the mechanics of the Ephesian procession with the massive foundation decree of Gaius Vibius Salutaris chiseled into the white marble walls of the southern entrance of the Great Theatre in Ephesus.[20]

This inscription contains over 568 lines of official decrees, public letters, and instructions for financial bookkeeping related to the lotteries and distributions associated with the annual celebration of the birth of the goddess and the procession. I.Eph 27 begins by celebrating the piety of Salutaris for his commitment to the city and this annual procession.

Greek Text Excerpt (I.Eph 27, lines 22–27):
Γάιος Οὐίβιος Σαλουτάριος, ἀνὴρ ἱππικῆς τάξεως... φιλόπατρις καὶ φιλοσέβαστος, εὐσεβείᾳ μὲν ἐκτενέστατος τὴν πρὸς τὴν θεὸν Ἄρτεμιν, καθιερώσας ἀπεικονίσματα ἀργύρεα καὶ χρύσεα... ὅπως κατὰ πᾶσαν ἐκκλησίαν φέρωνται εἰς τὸ θέατρον...

English Translation:
"Gaius Vibius Salutaris, a man of the equestrian order... a lover of his city and a lover of the Emperor, most extensive in his piety (*eusebeia*) toward the goddess Artemis, having consecrated silver and golden statues... so that during every public assembly they may be carried into the theatre…"

Rogers identifies Salutaris as an extraordinarily wealthy Roman equestrian who had achieved vast financial success through the imperial tax-collecting infrastructure.[21] Upon retiring to Ephesus, Salutaris sought to secure his permanent social legacy by executing a massive act of public benefaction (*euergetism*).

Rogers notes that I.Eph 27 honors the *eusebeia* (piety) of Salutaris nine times, equating piety with his capacity to underwrite the ongoing spectacle.[22] Piety linked not to his internal psychological state. It was measured by his willingness to establish silver and gold endowments, clear debt records for the temple, and fund annual cash lotteries and food distributions for the citizens.

At the core of the provisions of the Salutaris foundation, a close reading reveals the creation and maintenance of 31 silver and gold statues representing Artemis, the Roman Emperor, the Senate, the equestrian order, and the distinct civic tribes of Ephesus.[23] I.Eph 27 establishes a strictly regulated circular procession route, mandating when and how the statues were carried from the Artemisium into the city for major civic gatherings and festivals, such as the birthday of Artemis.

According to the instructions in I.Eph 27, the statues came out of the safety of the Artemisium, through the Magnesian Gate, and into the upper urban core. They processed down the primary public avenues, and went directly into the Great Theatre during each official *ekklesia* (assembly). Following the assembly, the parade exited through the Coressian Gate to return the silver and gold icons back to the temple sanctuary.[24]

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[19] Hermann Wankel et al., eds., *Die Inschriften von Ephesos* (Bonn: Habelt, 1979), 1:124–165. Abbreviated as I.Eph 27.
[20] I.Eph 27 funded the procession and activities on the birthday of Artemis and recurring civic events: twelve monthly assemblies, high priest installations, gymnastic contests, and major festivals. This schedule outlined elite parades in Ephesus roughly every two weeks.
[21] Guy MacLean Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesos: Foundation Myths of a Roman City* (London: Routledge, 1991), 18.
[22] Rogers, *The Sacred Identity*, 33.
[23] I.Eph 27, lines 45–70.
[24] Rogers, *The Sacred Identity*, Appendix 1.

James R. Harrison highlights the profound socio-political implications of this specific route.[25] By marching these 31 heavy metallic icons through the physical landscape of the metropolis, Salutaris executed a visual integration of Roman imperial power and local Ephesian mythic identity. The statues of the Augusti (the imperial household) marched side-by-side with the ancient statues of Artemis, sending a clear message to the populace: the security of the Roman Empire and the economic wealth of Ephesus must be understood as structurally intertwined.

Steven J. Friesen notes that this procession functioned as an active tool of elite-driven political alignment.[26] To stand along the road and cheer for this parade was an act of civic loyalty; to dissent from it or refuse participation was interpreted as a treasonous act of *asebeia* (impiety) that threatened the relationship of the city with Rome and Artemis.[27]

In addition to outlining instructions related to the procession on the celebration of the birth of the goddess, as portrayed in *Ephesiaca*, in I.Eph 27, lines 51-55, we see additional processions taking place during the twelve sacred and regular assembly meetings and linked to other events, totaling about two each month. The cultic law outlined the instances for the statues to process.

I.Eph 27 reveals who must carry these heavy silver and gold statues through the streets. The inscription mandated that the *ephebes*—the elite young men of the city portrayed in *Ephesiaca*—were to take up the statues at the Magnesian Gate and bear them throughout the urban loop.

Greek Text Excerpt (I.Eph 27, lines 240–245):
...ὑποδέχεσθαι δὲ τὰ ἀπεικονίσματα
τοὺς ἐφήβους ἀπὸ τῆς Μαγνησίας πύλης
καὶ συνπροπέμπειν μέχρι τοῦ θεάτρου...
μετὰ πάσης εὐκοσμίας...

English Translation:
"...and the ephebes (*ephebous*) shall receive the statues from the Magnesian Gate and accompany the procession as far as the theatre... with all good order (*eukosmia*)…"

The term *eukosmia* (proper decorum) here functions as a strict civic category. It demands that the youth perform the ritual with absolute precision, matching the choreographed expectations. Paul Trebilco observes that by involving the *epheboi* (ephebes) as the literal backbone of the procession, the Ephesian aristocracy aimed to ensure the ideological preservation of its youth.[28]

The young elite men were forced to display their allegiance by sweating under the weight of Roman imperial imagery and cultic icons. The Salutaris procession was, by definition, a loud, visible, elite-driven theatrical display. It transformed the city into a stage for the performance of political loyalty, wealth accumulation, and aristocratic dominance over the entire populace.[29]

The financial details in I.Eph 27, lines 312–330, show that this ritual required ongoing funding. Salutaris did not just buy the statues; he set up an endowment secured by real estate loans. The interest from these loans paid for regular cleanings of the silver and gold icons, bought oil for the sacrificial lamps, and provided cash handouts to participating groups. For Ephesians, the financial backing and performance of processions aimed to ensure the economic survival of the city.[30]

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[25] James R. Harrison, "An Epigraphic Portrait of Ephesus and Its Villages," in *The First Urban Churches 3: Ephesus* (ed. James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 47.
[26] Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 146.
[27] Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 152.
[28] Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 25.
[29] Trebilco, *The Early Christians*, 27.
[30] Rogers, *The Sacred Identity*, 42.

Furthermore, I.Eph 27, lines 415-442, outlined precise rules for who could touch or move the statues. Only specific temple officials and designated citizens could handle them, and they had to wear special white garments to maintain religious purity. This strict control over the icons showed that access to the divine was carefully managed by the wealthy ruling class. All the other citizens of Ephesus and foreigners could only look at the gold and silver from a distance.

I.Eph 27 aimed to maintain the social, cultural, and religious prominence of the annual Ephesian festival procession. We see locals and foreigners honor Artemis and the Augusti. And we read of other processions which appear as theatrical parades to remind the citizens to preserve the sacred identity and economic prosperity of the city.

I.Eph 27 also portrays a wealthy citizen demonstrating his *eusebeia* (piety) by turning his private financial assets into a public visual monument. This system left no space for an alternate view of religion. To exhibit piety in Ephesus in the first century and into the second century CE linked directly to using money for displays to preserve the social customs and religious laws.

Part 3: Comparative Analysis and Implications for Reading 1 Timothy

When the literary screenplay of *Ephesiaca* and the rigid epigraphic mandates of I.Eph 27 are viewed alongside 1 Timothy, the ethical frameworks in the letter undergo a dramatic interpretive shift. For over a century, the historical-critical consensus has argued that the domestic directives in 1 Timothy signaled ideological surrender to achieve quiet respectability in the early Roman Empire. However, local literary and material evidence reveals just the opposite dynamic.

Rather than calling for assimilation to social and cultural rules, the author of 1 Timothy appears to use the public grammar linked to life in Ephesus and give a new subversive meaning to key terms. This strategy aligns with the footprint of the early Christian movement, which did not remain silent but rather "navigated—and often disrupted and adapted—the dominant forces of their age."[31] Part 3 features comparative analysis and implications for reading 1 Timothy.

Rather than advocating for bourgeois accommodation (*christliche Bürgerlichkeit*) to Greco-Roman culture as suggested by Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, the author of 1 Timothy appears to deconstruct the civic terms and themes shared with *Ephesiaca* and I.Eph 27, and sets forth a new way of thinking and living linked to authority and order.[32]

The polemical confrontation begins in the prescript of the letter (1 Timothy 1:1), where the author of 1 Timothy refers to God as "Savior" (*Soter).* In *Ephesiaca* 5.15.2, *Soter* is an epithet belonging to Artemis, who is petitioned and praised by Anthia and Habrocomes as the cosmic deliverer from peril, shipwreck, and death. By anchoring the title *Soter* in the opening of the epistle, the author of 1 Timothy frames the letter as a challenge to the salvific monopoly claimed by the Artemisium.

The subversion deepens in 1 Timothy 1:3–7, as the author of 1 Timothy links "different doctrines" to "myths and endless genealogies" (*mythois kai genealogiais aperantois*). In the metropolis of Ephesus, ancestry functioned as the primary currency of social, religious, and political authority.

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[31] Michael T. Cooper, *Gods, Emperors, Philosophers, and a New Movement: Discovering the Movement of God in the Archaeological Record of Asia Minor* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2026), back cover.

[32] Martin Dibelius, *Urchristentum und Kultur: Rektoratsrede gehalten bei der Stiftungsfeier der Universität am* 22. November 1927 (Heidelberger Universitätsreden 2; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1928), 12–15; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ed. Helmut Koester; trans. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 39–41.

In *Ephesiaca* 1.1.1 and 1.2.5, Xenophon of Ephesus introduces his protagonists, Anthia and Habrocomes, through their aristocratic lineage, labeling their parents as indigenous elites (*epichorioi*) whose ancestral roots validated their hereditary right to municipal dominance.

Similarly, I.Eph 27 explicitly protects this social, religious, and political hierarchy by engraving the names of the six civic tribes and outlining benefits for those who can trace their genealogical roots and ancestral ties; it also maps activities to observe in perpetuity to advance the Artemis myth.[33] Elite citizens like Salutaris used their genealogy to legitimize their oligarchic control.

The focus on public display shifts to physical presentation in 1 Timothy 2:9–10. The prohibition for Ephesian women against plaited hair (*plegmasin*), gold (*chrysio*), pearls (*margaritais*), and costly clothing (*himatismo polytelei*) matches the performative luxury worn by elite women and *parthenoi* during the annual *pompe* to the temple of Artemis in Ephesus.

Ephesiaca 1.2 meticulously itemizes Anthia's hyper-ornamental dress—her plaited hair, purple tunic, and elaborate accessories—as a highly orchestrated performance of family capital, civic prestige, and external piety (*eusebeia*). By prohibiting Christian women from displaying wealth in this way, the text decouples devotion to Artemis and calls them to devote their wealth to good deeds (*ergon agathon*) that show their devotion has shifted to God (*theosebeian*).

Next, 1 Timothy 3:1–13 subverts the benefactor architecture of civic leadership by outlining alternative qualifications for overseers (*episkopos*) and deacons (*diakonos*). In Ephesus in the first century CE, municipal offices and associations were transactional playgrounds reserved for the wealthy or people with prominent lineage.

As documented in I.Eph 27, lines 240–245, the elite young men (*epheboi*) were commanded to maintain strict good order or proper decorum (*eukosmia*) while laboring under the weight of heavy silver and gold idols and marching through the urban loop. In this pagan framework, *eukosmia* was a rigid, choreographed dignity designed to validate the aristocracy's right to rule.

1 Timothy 3 flips this civic fixture and redefines orderly conduct (*kosmion*) from an external show to an internal character trait.[34] By making *aphilargyron* (not a lover of money) a qualification, the text separates church oversight and service from the public theater of elite benefaction.[35]
As Philip H. Towner observes, the proving ground for ecclesiastical authority relocates from the public arena to the private household (*oikos*), where quiet integrity, marital fidelity, and gentle discipline replace the aggressive, transactional ambition of the Ephesian aristocracy.[36]

In 1 Timothy 3:14–16, the text presents the alternative Christian community as the household of God, the pillar and foundation (*hedraioma*) of the truth, and proclaims the great "mystery of godliness" (*to tes eusebeias mysterion*). In I.Eph 27, *eusebeia* (godliness) relates to honoring Salutaris for advancing cultic laws and funding activities to honor Artemis and the Augusti.

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[33] Ll. 22–27 celebrate the elite family lineage, status, and rank of Gaius Vibius Salutaris as a Roman equestrian and citizen; ll. 45–70 mandate the creation of silver and gold statues for each of the six civic tribes of Ephesus; ll. 51–55 lock in the calendar for monthly processions during the city's twelve assembly (*ekklesia*) meetings; ll. 134–332 institutionalize tribal lines, ensuring that civic benefits and wealth allocations be permanently tied to ancestral family descent and outline where funds and lotteries are split among the tribal registries; ll. 240–245 map strict instructions for the *ephebes* to carry the statues from the Magnesian Gate to the Great Theatre.
[34] David C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (SBLDS 71; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 147–60.
[35] Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens, First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 61–78.
[36] Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 250.

Michael Immendörfer notes that this architectural and liturgical vocabulary subverts the operational realities of the setting.[37] The true foundation and piety (*eusebeia*) link not to the base of a monument reserved for the elite but to the household of God open to all, and the mystery points to Christ rather than Artemis and the Augusti.

Furthermore, 1 Timothy 3:16 declares that Christ "appeared" or "was manifested in the flesh" (*ephanerothe en sarki*). This expression employs the cultic language of epiphany (*epiphaneia*). In *Ephesiaca* 1.2, when Anthia marches in the *pompe*, the crowd collapses into ecstatic worship, viewing her appearance and material luxury as the arrival or epiphany of Artemis.

The confrontation intensifies in 1 Timothy 4:6–10, where the author commands Timothy to reject irreverent, silly myths and instead "train yourself for godliness" (*gymnaze de seauton pros eusebeian*). In the Ephesian context, "training" (*gymnasia*) was a foundational civic and ideological institution. Both *Ephesiaca* and I.Eph 27 attest to this.

In *Ephesiaca* 1.2.2, Xenophon of Ephesus depicts the young hero Habrocomes as a sixteen-year-old member of the *ephebes* whose disciplined preparation earns "first place in the procession." These young men underwent rigorous physical, aesthetic, and ritual training in the gymnasium.

In I.Eph 27, lines 240–245, we see one of the responsibilities of the *ephebes*. They had to carry the massive silver and gold statues on a specific path and parade them into the Great Theatre with all good order. This occurred about 25 times a year or about every two weeks.

1 Timothy 4:8 subverts the institution of the *ephebes*, declaring that while bodily training (*somatike gymnasia*) is of limited value, training for godliness holds cosmic promise. The text calls for an ideological reallocation of effort for a different savior: instead of training to carry heavy metallic idols to win public prestige, the believer must train for an alternative, character-driven devotion anchored in the "living God, who is the Savior (*Soter*) of all people" (1 Timothy 4:10).[38]

The polemic reaches a dramatic crescendo in the ethical charges of 1 Timothy 6:11–16. The author exhorts Timothy to pursue righteousness, godliness (*eusebeia*), faith, and love, culminating in a vision that proclaims God as the "blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords," who dwells in "unapproachable light" (*phos aprositon*). This rhetorical strategy targets the combined weight of local cultic piety and Roman imperial ideology that saturated Ephesus.

Throughout the 568 lines of I.Eph 27, the Roman Emperor, the Senate, and the imperial household are intertwined with Artemis. Their 31 silver and gold statues marched side-by-side through the Magnesian Gate into the Great Theatre during every official assembly (*ekklesia*).

While *Ephesiaca* depicts a metropolis enchanted by the splendor of the *pompe* and shiny statues, the letter redirects Timothy's gaze toward an unseen, cosmic sovereign. The text contrasts the temporary brilliance of Ephesian visual luxury with the imperishable, unapproachable light of the true God, and redirects the focus of true piety away from Artemis and the Augusti toward God.

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[37] Michael Immendörfer, *Ephesians and Artemis: The Cult of the Great Goddess of Ephesus as the Epistle's Context* (WUNT 2. Reihe 436; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 90–95.
[38] Gary G. Hoag, "The Honorific Title 'Savior' in Ancient Coins, the Inscriptions of Ephesus, and 1 Timothy," paper delivered at the International Society of Biblical Literature 2026 Conference in Adelaide, Australia.

Finally, 1 Timothy 6:17–19 executes a radical deconstruction of ancient wealth management and elite legacy-building. The passage warns the rich against the "uncertainty of wealth" (*ploutou adeloteti*) and commands them to store up capital that forms a "good foundation" (*themelion kalon*) for the future. In the Greco-Roman world, the wealthy secured their social and cosmic legacy through the public and material monumentalism of civic benefaction (*euergetism*).

Rogers documents that elites like Salutaris established financial foundations to guarantee the economic survival of the city and secure their own immortal social memory.[39] Similarly, Xenophon of Ephesus mirrors this behavior at the climax of *Ephesiaca*, where Anthia and Habrocomes return to Ephesus to erect a public inscription to cement their legacy (5.15.2).

1 Timothy 6:17–19 subverts this system of control. The rich are commanded not to invest capital in statues or parades to win civic prestige, but to be rich in good works, generous, and "ready to share" (*koinonikous*) across class lines. The true "good foundation" (*themelion kalon*) shifts from an earthly endowment to a Christ-centered framework of radical generosity and economic equity that, when practiced, enables the rich to take hold of the only life that is real.

Part 4: Conclusion

Reading 1 Timothy within the narrative and material landscapes of Ephesus in the first century CE shifts our understanding of its instructions. Rather than signaling bourgeois accommodation (*christliche Bürgerlichkeit*) to Greco-Roman society, the letter functions as a sharp polemical counter-text against the intertwined monopolies of Artemis and the Augusti.

By co-opting and subverting civic grammar—including savior (*Soter*), genealogy (*genealogia*), adornment (*himatismos*), decorum (*eukosmia*), training (*gymnasia*), piety (*eusebeia*), and foundation (*themelion*)—the author strips elite networks of their socio-religious control. Godliness is decoupled from transactional, theatrical luxury and re-anchored within the character-driven integrity and radical generosity of the alternative Christian household.

[39] Rogers, The Sacred Identity, 33, 88.

Abstract:
For over a century, a historical-critical consensus has maintained that the ethical and domestic directives in 1 Timothy represent a late, bourgeois accommodation (*christliche Bürgerlichkeit*) to Greco-Roman culture. While recent scholarship has challenged that paradigm, consensus remains divided. This study brings together little-known literary evidence and often-overlooked epigraphic material to establish a fresh socio-historical framework for reading 1 Timothy.

Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus, dated to approximately 50 CE, functions like a screenplay of the annual festival procession (*pompe*) honoring Artemis. When examined alongside the largest extant epigraphic monument in Ephesus—the Gaius Vibius Salutaris inscription, I.Eph 27 dated to 104 CE—both sources demonstrate how the Ephesian aristocracy fused ancestral lineage, material luxury, and civic benefaction (*euergetism*) to reinforce cultic monopolies and enforce political loyalty to Artemis and the Augusti.

This paper shows how the author of 1 Timothy strategically co-opts, deconstructs, and subverts Ephesus's dominant public grammar. Rather than advocating quiet assimilation, 1 Timothy operates as a polemical counter-text. By re-anchoring savior (*Soter*), decorum (*eukosmia*), training (*gymnasia*), piety (*eusebeia*), and foundation (*themelion*) in Christ, the letter redirects devotion toward character-driven integrity within the household of God.

Keywords:
1 Timothy, *Ephesiaca*, Xenophon of Ephesus, I.Eph 27, Gaius Vibius Salutaris, Artemis, socio-historical criticism, procession (*pompe*), Savior (*Soter*), piety (*eusebeia*), decorum (*eukosmia*), training (*gymnasia*), elite youth (*epheboi*), good foundation (*themelion kalon*), and household (*oikos*).