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# The Letter to Titus in Recent Scholarship: A Critical Overview

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## Abstract

A review of literature over the last two decades suggests that the letter to Titus is inching away from the suffocating influence of the Timothean correspondence. Caged together with 1 and 2 Timothy, the individual voice of Titus went largely unappreciated. This trend is in decline. For example, scholars are now investigating the theology and structure 'of Titus' rather than of 'the Pastorals'. Furthermore, even in terms of methodological interests, there seems to be a transition with at least one article applying rhetorical analysis to the text. This overview surveys these trends by engaging critically with the literature, highlighting the burgeoning appreciation for the individuality of the letter independent from 1 and 2 Timothy. While the trends are encouraging, the study reveals that comparatively little has been done. Put differently, it is hoped that this overview will stimulate further interest in the letter to Titus.

## Keywords

Pastoral Letters, rhetorical criticism, Titus.

## Introduction

The notorious authorship debate has spawned voluminous academic output related to the corpus known as the Pastorals. In contrast to the Timothean correspondence, literature dealing exclusively with Titus tends to be sparse. For example, the most comprehensive and reputable, single-volume commentary dedicated to Titus is probably J.D. Quinn's, *The Letter to Titus: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary and an Introduction to Titus, 1 Timothy, and the Pastoral Epistles* (Quinn 1990). The trend has, however, been to treat Titus indistinctly; part of the Siamese triplets known as the Pastorals. It is therefore a matter of prudence to delineate the parameters of this paper.

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## Preliminary Caveats

This overview has at least one idiosyncrasy and several limitations. It is idiosyncratic because of its hybrid nature. At certain points succinct and bibliographic, at others it is critical and evaluative. This will be developed later in the paper. This review only considers literature on Titus independently of 1 and 2 Timothy. It includes only such English commentaries, books and periodical material that over the last two decades have addressed, in a significant manner, elements of Titus. The sheer volume of available publications in the English-speaking world makes folly of any claim to comprehensiveness. Most commentaries on the Pastorals perpetuate the longstanding convention of approaching Titus from the perspective of the authenticity debate; subsequently they make no new contributions to progress our understanding of the distinctiveness of the letter and are consequently not included for review. Therefore, this overview only includes research that contributes to our understanding of the content of the letter and transcends the confines of the authorship debate. Anything else will be cited in the bibliography. Finally, while I accede to the traditional view on authorship it is of no consequence for the present overview.

The hybrid character of the review combines bibliographic and critical evaluation. The former is merely informative. The latter is evaluative and limited to critical analysis of the most important research contributions. The decision to do detailed analyses requires justification. These are for the benefit of researchers that, like me, have limited access to information resources. Fortunately, the number of key articles is very limited.

Furthermore, research will be classified as either primary or secondary. Primary contributions signify research that introduce or stimulate the evolution of Titus from an obscure text interpreted as part of a trilogy to a prominent text the content of which is worthy of independent appreciation. These will be critically reviewed. Secondary contributions are more general in character and are cited either in the relevant section or will otherwise be referenced in the bibliography.

The preliminaries set aside, the overview will proceed along the following structure:

1. Phase 1: neglect
2. Phase 2: acknowledgment
3. Phase 3: growing appreciation

## Phase I: Neglect

The link between the authorship debate and the evident neglect of the Pastoral Epistles generally and Titus specifically is beyond dispute. With reference to the latter, it could be argued that Titus is doubly neglected. In relation to the rest of New Testament studies, the Pastorals as a corpus are considered marginalized. Next, Titus is deemed neglected *within* the corpus. By 1989 these three letters have all but disappeared from the radar of academic interest (Epp and MacRae 1989; Johnson 1996: 4-5). The peripherization of the Pastorals continued into the nineties. The Pretoria conference on Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology of 1994 has no contributions dealing with the Pastorals, yet the index discloses three pages of references to the early Christian writings and the classical authors (Porter and Olbricht 1996).

Within the corpus, Titus became the Cinderella letter: neglected, cast away in the shadows of the Timothean correspondence. Literature evidence suggests that for a relatively long period there was not much talk about, for example, the theology of Titus as opposed to the theology of the Pastorals. A 1994 collection of Pauline studies has absolutely zero references to Titus, but at least one to 1 and 2 Timothy (Lambrecht 1994: 464).

In summary, academic interest in the Pastorals as a corpus and Titus as an individual letter was in serious decline by 1989, a trend in which the authenticity debate played no small part. The corpus only featured when the discussion touched on authorship, while the individuality of each letter raised no eyebrows. Mercifully, this is a declining trend.

## Phase 2: Acknowledgment

The winds of change were blowing but initially only in a certain direction. A 2004 survey of research on the Pastorals announces a shift, from authorship issues to a focus upon the text itself, 'its theology, rhetoric, and reception' (McKnight and Osborne 2004: 292). It unfortunately only cites research addressing literary aspects of the Timothean correspondence. Thus, the individuality of the Timothean letters was the first to get some attention. Titus, always at the back of the line, would soon have its turn.

A flurry of recent articles stimulated by, ironically, the authorship debate, are pioneering appreciation for the independence of Titus. Research in theology, structure and cohesion, as well as rhetoric, represents major trends or primary contributions. Practical theology, provenance and exegetical papers complete the miscellany of secondary contributions. The three primary trends are critically evaluated in what follows.

### Theology

Several recent articles address the theology of Titus. This is done with varying degrees of comprehensiveness. Titus 2.13, a verse-specific study, regularly attracts robust discussion due to its christological implications (Smith and Song 2006; Bowman 2008). Theological studies are often pursued in order to defend traditional authorship (Hagner 1998: 550-55). The book, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Fee 2007) examines every statement about Christ including whether Titus 2.13 refers to Jesus Christ as 'God'. Fee's conclusion, namely that the divine reference is not applicable to Jesus, has not gone unchallenged (Bowman 2008). Bowman's response is courteous, reasoned and academic; an exquisite example of scholarly acumen in its treatment of Tit. 2.13, a text that will still attract much debate. In addition to such single text studies are efforts to grapple with the theological implications of the entire letter.

'The Theology of the Epistle to Titus' (Collins 2000) and 'The Theology of Titus' (Thurston 1999) are similar in approach. Neither are apologetic treatises of the authenticity issue and both generally remain in the scope of the subject matter. Still, their investigation cannot escape the impact of the authorship debate. Thurston, in a footnote, emphasizes that she makes no presuppositions regarding authorship (1999: 171). Collins categorically declares his support for pseudonymity (2000: 56-57) and risks being understood to approach the topic with an agenda, namely to prove presuppositional pseudonymity or double pseudonymity through his investigation of the theology of the letter

(2000: 57). This, rather unfortunate, approach obscures appreciation for the individuality of the letter. The complexity of the debate is translated into the text itself. His insistence to raise the authenticity issue in his article has Collins creating an additional person, as the following demonstrates: 'For the pastor the commission entrusted to Paul to proclaim the word...?' (2000: 63). When the designation, 'Paul', is objectified like this, it complicates the reading and interpretation of an otherwise straightforward sentence. He could easily have qualified his use of the designation 'Paul', comfortably employing it to facilitate reader-friendliness while remaining true to his conviction on the matter. It would be a better option instead of the more obscure 'fictive Paul', a description that considerably incapacitates an otherwise helpful article. The following examples will illumine the unnecessary awkwardness of the article: 'The pseudonymous author's intention to present...' or 'The author of Titus has enhanced the image of Paul...' (2000: 64) or 'The real author of the epistle goes on...', and finally '...the pastor attributes to Jesus...' At least four different references to the author! This kind of hazy language heightens the sense of clumsiness to an otherwise good article that intends to exemplify an appreciation for the unique or 'blatantly theological' content of Titus (2000: 56).

Both authors suggest three theological sections for the letter, namely 1.1-4, 2.11-14 and 3.4-7, and structure their articles around an analysis of each unit. Most scholars only consider the latter two sections as theological (Bailey 1994: 351-52). Thurston (1999: 177-78) believes christological soteriology is the focal point or theological core of the letter; 'the theology of God-as-Saviour' (1999: 183). Collins (2000: 56) sees God as the central focus of the letter deducible from the quintuple appearance of the noun in the opening verses. He continues, 'God is identified in terms of the attributes of truth, pater-nity, and salvation' (2000: 56). The theological foundations established by the pseudonymous author in the introduction is developed and elaborated in the body of the letter.

Vocabulary suggests the theological scope of the letter. Collins (2000: 61-62) addresses the topic of godliness and the phrase 'hope of eternal life'. He links the former to the designation of the church as God's elect. Thurston (1999: 177) highlights the words 'faith', 'saviour', 'grace' and 'hope' as significant markers of the theological character of Titus.

Thurston does not elaborate upon the role of the Holy Spirit apart from mentioning his agency and that he comes through Jesus Christ (1999: 181-82). This is presumably due to her interpretation that the heart of this letter is christological. Most probably it is because relatively little is said about the Holy Spirit in the letter. What she does emphasize, and with Collins's concurrence, is that Titus 3.4-7 is a hymn or creedal fragment 'with a Trinitarian structure' (Karris 1996; Thurston 1999: 181; Collins 2000: 66-67).

The merit of both articles lies in their comprehensive approach to the topic, yet there is still scope for further investigation. While the influence of the authenticity debate is still a reality, its domination no longer is. The emancipation of Titus has dawned.

### *Structure and Cohesion*

There are essentially only two positions when addressing the specific matter of the structure of Titus. The first is that Titus, in the light of the whole corpus, has no structure and is incoherent (Miller 1997); the second is that Titus has a definite and justifiable structure, and constitutes a coherent unit of discourse (Van-Neste 2002). Some scholars employ

discourse analysis to argue the same (Clark 2002; Keating 2003) while a peculiar chiasmic structure is posited as an option (Clark 2002; Smith 2007). Another recent work utilizes narratology to explain the purpose and structure (Marshall 2008). Van Neste, however, focuses exclusively on Titus, whereas several prior voices cheered for the coherency of the Pastorals collectively (Verner 1983; Donelson 1986; Fiore 1986; Towner 1989).

The contributions by Miller and Van Neste represent substantial progress towards the recognition of the uniqueness of this letter. These two studies require critical engagement for at least two reasons. First, they approach Titus as independent from 1 and 2 Timothy. Second, and with due recognition of their respective objectives, they approach it from opposite ends of the authenticity debate.

### James D. Miller

Miller's book, *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents*, investigates all three letters but devotes one section to Titus, entitled in what he terms '*a compositional analysis*' (Miller 1997: 124-37).

He divides the letter as follows:

1.1-4	Epistolary salutation
1.5	Epistolary motive
1.6-9	Qualities required of a good leader
1.10-16	Polemical warnings
2.1-10	Domestic rules: qualities of good community members
2.11-14	Creedal fragment
2.15	Literary marker
3.3-8	Creedal fragment
3.9-11	Polemical admonitions: on dealing with opponents
3.12-15	Personalia and greetings

Miller's conclusion on the composition of the Pastorals collectively is representative of his views on the structure of the letter to Titus. Some examples will suffice:

...the letters have no driving concern, no consistent focus of interest; instead, they read like an anthology of traditions, many arranged mechanically together by topic, some simply juxtaposed (1997: 138).

...[o]rganization and development of thought...the Pastorals are characterized by a remarkable lack of both (1997: 139-40).

Miller opines that the salutation of Titus is 'notoriously complicated and confusing' (1997: 124). Moreover, he finds the style of the salutation 'overloaded', its grammar 'confusing' and its content 'unusual'. These 'peculiarities' Miller (1997: 125) attributes to the hand of a later editor. He readily concedes that the section on leadership displays evidence of unity, but maintains, on vocabulary evidence and what he terms as 'abrupt' and 'sudden' changes in sentences, that more than one author was involved (Miller 1997:

126). Basically, Miller denies that Titus has any structure. Moreover, the present form of the letter is attributable to intersections of different material by different authors at different stages during the formation of this document. Miller's conclusions, which have been challenged recently by Ray van Neste, are applicable to the entire corpus and, as mentioned earlier, apply *mutatis mutandis* to the letter to Titus.

### Ray van Neste

Van Neste (2002: 119-20) has found in the hypothesis of Miller that the letters are composite texts, originating as short Pauline compositions, elaborated over time, through multiple editorial embellishments, a great challenge to the theology and meaning of the Pastorals. In response, he calls for an analysis of what he terms the 'linguistic cohesiveness' of the text (Van Neste 2002: 118-19). This literary or linguistic approach must seek to investigate the linguistic mechanisms by which links are created between various discourses. In other words, it seeks to explain how to recognize coherency in a piece of discourse.

He defines cohesion as 'the quality of a text which creates a sense that it "hangs together", and makes sense' (2002: 121). A text is cohesive when there are links between all the material comprising that text, so much so that 'an understanding of one element requires an understanding of other elements in the text' through continuity and repetition (Van Neste 2002: 121). In other words, there should be an element of textual interdependence within the discourse unit.

The article suggests three ways in which cohesion in Titus is created (2002: 121). First is cohesion shift analysis (2002: 122-26); next are transitional devices (2002: 126-27) and finally repetitions (2002: 127-30). Quoting linguists Brown and Yule, Van Neste explains the first method as follows: 'Between two contiguous pieces of discourse which are intuitively considered to have two different "topics" there should be a point at which the shift from one topic to the next is marked' (2002: 122). Transitions between adjacent units are usually identifiable by significant shifts in 'cohesion fields'. The latter signify 'genre, topic, subject, participants, verb tense, person and number as well as temporal and local frames of reference' (2002: 122). Continuity between the different fields greatly enhances the cohesiveness of the discourse while discontinuity indicates development within the discourse (2002: 122). High levels of shifts will indicate paragraphic transitions, signifying the start of a new textual unit. Applied to Titus, he demonstrates that the unit evinces remarkable cohesiveness, linked by the dual concern of ethics and doctrine which 'bind unit to unit throughout the letter' (2002: 126). His efforts are targeted at averting the challenge of Miller's hypothesis, and are highly plausible. He demonstrates the presence of linguistic devices in the text, namely 'hook' words (2002: 126). Two variations of these are the 'distant hook word' and the 'hooked keyword' (2002: 126). An example is the recurrent phrase in 2.10, 'God our Saviour', which the author demonstrably judges to introduce and provide cohesion with 2.11-14. He, thus, disagrees with Miller's criticism that the transitions between these two units are not smooth and that the logical relationships are obscure (2002: 127). Moreover, he questions Miller's insistence that 1.10-16 and 2.1-10 are isolated units, independent from the rest of the context, by demonstrating that transitional devices indicate the intentional cohesion within the first part of the letter.



Next, he shows how the repetition of words, phrases or ideas facilitates cohesion and structure. He observes and demonstrates the operation of lexical cohesion between the salutation (1.1-4) and the doctrinal sections (2.11-14, 3.3-7) arguing, furthermore, for the presence of an *inclusio* between 2.1 and 2.15 with the repetition of the words 'to teach' and 'to exhort' (2002: 129). Next follows a demonstration of the parallels between sections 3.1-8 and 2.1-15: both envisage ethical living based on an introductory command; both precede a doctrinal section introduced by the word 'for' (gar); both shift back to the present tense with an exhortation for Titus to teach authoritatively. Finally, he suggests 2.1-15 and 3.1-8 should be read as a single unit arguing that the prior reference has a more complete introduction that is complimented best by the more complete conclusion of the latter reference (2002: 129-30).

Miller's challenge stirred the pot, in the process drawing attention to the topic of Titus's structure. It stimulated an investigation as to whether Titus has any structure at all! The article by Van Neste is a significant attempt to defend the unity of the letter and to guard against the implications of the incoherency theory, which effectively renders the letter and its theology as meaningless. Van Neste's cry, which must be heeded, is for 'further analysis of the structure and cohesion of the Pastoral Epistles, and Titus specifically' (2002: 118). More development is anticipated as the attention shifts to the text or textual content of Titus through rhetorical critical assessment.

### Rhetorical Criticism

Exclusive treatises of the rhetoric of Titus are, to put it mildly, hard to locate. There are several reasons for this situation. The first relates, perhaps, to the relative novelty of the rhetorical critical methodology. The second reason might be the fact that this letter is much shorter than the other two Pastorals. There appears to be so much more to say about the letters to Timothy, because their scope and content are comparatively more extensive. The net result, or impression, is unfortunately that the compendious letter to Titus appears to be treated as a footnote within discussions of the larger Timothean corpus. One gets the impression that it is almost 'tacked' on to whatever is said in regard to the other two letters. One exception is the magisterial work by Jerome Quinn, whose posthumous volume on Titus is accorded '[p]ride of place' in a recent evaluation of commentaries on the Pastorals (Marshall 2006: 140). A final and most important reason for the perceived marginalization of the letter is the inextricable relationship with the authenticity debate and the cumulative-complimentary reading of the letters.

Over the last three decades, there has been a tremendous surge of interest in rhetorical criticism and the literature of the New Testament. Unfortunately, very little of this rekindled interest has been directed towards the Pastorals collectively and even less to Titus. If a glance at several academic journals is anything to go by, then much remains to be done.

For example, a collection of essays entitled *Pauline Studies* (Lambrecht 1994: 464-65) has zero references to Titus, although 1 and 2 Timothy share six. A 1996 collection *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology* (Porter and Olbricht 1996) has nothing on any of the three letters, but three pages of references from 'Early Christian Writings and Classical Authors'. In *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture* (Porter and Stamps 1999), Christian and Classical authors share five pages of references. 1 Timothy is mentioned



twice, followed by 2 Timothy, which is mentioned four times. Titus is referred to only once. *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (Porter and Stamps 2002) has four and a half pages of references to 'Post Biblical Jewish Literature', including Josephus, classical authors and other ancient sources. This more than 500-page collection has one reference each to the Timothean corpus, and zero to Titus. While not conclusive, the data suggest the need for a comprehensive rhetorical analysis of each letter individually and independent of each other.

Except for two, rhetorical analysts have yet to come to the party. *Tradition and Rhetoric in the Pastoral Epistles* (Harding 1998), as the title indicates, treats and interprets the letters collectively. Harding argues for the 'literateness of the PE as letters and as persuasive communications of the received Pauline heritage' (1998: 4). His extensive treatment of this group of letters, while valuable, is weakened by the cumulative-complimentary reading of the texts. Plotting the way forward, he expresses the conviction that these letters are 'readily susceptible...to rhetorical analysis' (1998: 234). A socio-rhetorical commentary series is the other fresh contribution to the study of the Pastorals (Witherington 2006).

There remains, with the exception of Harding and Quinn, room and a definite need for extensive rhetorical analysis of the individual letters, Titus in particular. This little letter must be rescued from beneath the shadow of its counterparts. Joachim Classen appears to be the only scholar who has recently done a rhetorical interpretation or, as he calls it, 'reading' of the Letter to Titus.

### *Carl Joachim Classen: 'A Rhetorical Reading of the Epistle to Titus'*

In *Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament* (Classen 2002), one section is dedicated to the rhetoric of Titus. Classen (2002: 45) defines rhetoric as 'the deliberate calculated use of language for the sake of communicating various kinds of information in the manner intended by the speaker (and the theory of such use)'. He explains rhetorical reading as:

[R]eading a text in order to grasp the information it intends to impart, to understand its meaning or its message by appreciating and explaining the function of every single part of it as well as of the composition as a whole (2002: 46).

This implies:

[R]eading a text as composed by an authoress or an author with the particular intention of addressing a particular audience or individual at a particular moment or a wider public (wider both with regard to space and time) and, therefore, formulated in a carefully considered manner (2002: 46).

In his definition of rhetorical reading, Classen understands three aspects to be materially significant. First, there is the text itself, then the relationship between author and audience as discernable, and thirdly the structure of the text.

Classen begins his reading with a brief reference to authorship in regard to which he argues for pseudonymous authorship (2002: 48). Furthermore, he believes that the letter should not be analysed in isolation but by comparison with the authentic Pauline corpus.

Classen's final structure is divided into seven sections:

- 1.1–4: Salutation
- 1.5–13a: The mandate to Titus, qualifications for eldership and the characterization of the opponents
- 1.13b–2:15: A long section, involving a general instruction for Titus to address Cretan unbelief
- 3.1–7: Specific 'aspects' with justifications
- 3.8–11: Some admonitions and promises related to unbelievers and believers respectively
- 3.12–14: Particular instructions
- 3.15: Final greetings

He performs the analysis in two parts: Part one is essentially linguistic. It focuses on the explanation of the unique phrases and vocabulary of the letter (Classen 2002: 48–63). This takes the form of an analysis of the first few sentences of the letter, with particular emphasis upon the introductory vocabulary. Throughout his evaluation, he highlights the significance of and relationship between some of the distinctive words.

In part two, Classen (2002: 63) shows the relationship between the sentences, specifically the linguistic mechanisms that tie the letter into a coherent whole. These include a number of individual keywords that make several reappearances in the body of the letter: *pistis* (faith), *sōtēr* (saviour), *apseudēs* (unlying), *phaneroō* (appear) and *zōē aiōnios* (life eternal).

He demonstrates how the salutation flows, without transition markers, into the specific instructions to Titus (1.5–6). This section is then followed by the characterization of elders, which concludes with the requirement that elders be able 'to hold on to the faithful word and to refute the opposition' (*hina dunatōs hē kai parakalein en tē didaskalia tē hugianousē kai tous antilegontas elegchein*, 1.9). *Tous antilegontas* ('those who contradict', 1.9) and *polloi* (many, 1.10) introduce the section that addresses the opposition. The description of the opposition is a tightly knit section that concludes with a description of the motives from which these illegitimate teachers teach (1.11) followed by the prophet's quotation in verse 12. The affirmation expressed by the use of the faithful saying (1.13) concludes the section. Classen draws attention to the linguistic link between verses 7, *mē aischrokerdē* (not greedy for gain) and 11, [*ha*] *mē dei aischrou kerdous charin* ([things] not necessary for the sake of dishonest/shameful gain/profit).

Classen does not explain the linguistic link between verse 13, *elegche autous* (rebuke them) and verse 9, *tous antilegontas elegchein* (to rebuke those who contradict). 'Soundness' (*hugiainō*) and 'belief' (*pistis*) repeated, often in tandem, throughout the letter (1.4; 1.9; 1.13), accentuate coherence (Classen 2002: 64). The section concludes with another characterization of the opponents as 'men who have turned away from the truth' (*anthrōpōn apostrephomenōn tēn alētheian*). He ties the entire section from 1.1–13a together as expressive of a mandate for Titus, involving justification for his authority, based upon the characterizations of the elders and the opponents. The additional pejorative references to the opposition (1.15–16) fall within the next division that forms part of a general instruction to Titus.

The presence of imperatival verbs strikes Classen as significant. It appears to be the singular influence in his decisions about the structure of the letter. His next division commences from 1.13b, which contains an imperative. Thus, he does not regard chapter two as introducing a new section, preferring, instead, to draw a correlation between the imperative in 2.1, *lalei* (say) and 1.13, *elegchē* (rebuke). The recurring emphasis on soundness solidifies this persuasion; thus *hugiainō* (to be sound/healthy) in 2.1 and 1.13. He finds additional corroboration in the linguistic allusion between the expressions *ha prepei* (things suitable) occurring in 2.1 and *ha mē dei* (things not necessary) in 1.11. Due to the occurrence of the imperative verb forms and the similarity in vocabulary, Classen justifies his decision to treat the section from 1.13b till the end of chapter 2 as a unit.

Further links with earlier sections are established through the repetition of the verb *antilegō* (contradict) in 2.9 as well as in 1.9. However, Classen (2002: 57-58) overplays his hand when he attempts to link 2.10 with 2.11 by translating *en pasin* (2.10) as 'amongst all *men*', in order to make it run parallel with 2.11, *pasin anthrōpos* (to all men). He, furthermore, prefers to skip the rest of the instructions given to the servant category. Instead, he disregards the rest of the instructions in 2.9 and 10 focusing only on the *hina*-clause in the latter verse. Furthermore, the dual occurrence of the adjective, *pas* (all, every), in verse 10 is deliberate, a point which the author does not explain in his book. More importantly though, Classen is not consistent in this translation of the expression, *en pasin* (among all [men]), which also occurs in verse 9. Unfortunately, he does not offer any translations in this regard. Thus, Classen's decision to translate the adjective substantively as 'all men' in verse 10 is perhaps a tinge arbitrary in order to justify his divisions of the letter.

Classen (2002: 65) observes that 2.1-15 comprises an independent unit in a section beginning in 1.13b and ending at 2.15 that contains specific instructions about sound belief to different categories of Cretans. The section is cordoned off by several imperatival verbs. The three are: *lalei* (say, speak), which introduces the section (2.1) and recurs in verse 15; *parakalei* (exhort) and *elegche* (reprove).

The next imperative in 3.1, *hupomimnēske* (remind) relates back to the preceding imperatives and is understood to link the two sections (Classen 2002: 65). The reason why Titus is given this instruction is attributable, according to Classen, firstly to human weaknesses (3.3) and, secondly, to divine love (3.4-7). He draws a very faint connection between 3.1-7 and 2.11, without highlighting any specific emphases (Classen 2002: 65). Two final imperatives, in 3.9, *periistaso* (avoid, shun) and 3.10, *paraitou* (reject, refuse) underscore the nature of the letter, which Classen summarizes as follows:

It is a letter with instructions, mandates, injunctions, admonitions and warnings, particular orders which are justified with the help of general considerations and put forward in a very clear and carefully structured arrangement (2002: 65).

These orders or instructions to Titus are programmatic for the structure of the letter. They are key signals together with the repetition of special vocabulary provided by the author to aid the reader's understanding of the letter (2002: 65). Classen defines in one sentence the rhetorical elements of *inventio*, *dispositio* and rhetorical situation (2002: 65) without offering any further elaboration.

In the very last section, Classen (2002: 65, 66) indicates what he considers to constitute the basic emphases of the author:

1. The belief of the people of God in his graciousness and promises of salvation and eternal life;
2. The need to know the sound teaching;
3. The need to live a moderate life and to perform *kala erga* (good works).

The article concludes with an outline of the letter based on the rationale as presented earlier.

### *Evaluation of Classen's Study*

It is fair to say that very little, if any, work has been done that has made the rhetoric of the letter to Titus its exclusive focus. Classen's 23-page treatment of Titus stands alone in this regard. A possible exception would be the 2006 socio-rhetorical commentary on the Pastorals (Witherington 2006).

Commendable about it is the decision to take the letter seriously and to evaluate it on its own merits. The decision to structure the letter around the occurrence of imperatives is rather novel. To my knowledge, this is the only analysis of Titus to attach such significance to that particular construct. His initial analysis of the sentences also renders helpful insight despite a subsequent tendency towards selective analyses of only parts of sentences. Unfortunately, there are also some weaknesses in his rhetorical reading.

Persuasion is a key aspect of rhetorical criticism. At no stage in his treatment of the letter does Classen even allude to this element. The issue should be 'Why does the author say what he is saying in the way he says it?' Classen's examination highlights what is there, i.e. in the text. He never attempts to go beyond that and answer the next question, why is it there? Leading on from this is, perhaps, a more serious shortcoming of the study.

Classen's assessment is more exegetical than rhetorical. His critical treatment interprets the contents of the text without disclosing any indication of motive. His article merely offers knowledge about the peculiar vocabulary of the letter, the special phrases, and the syntactical flow of ideas between sentences. The role of the unique vocabulary and what the peculiar sentence flow communicate about the intention of the author are left unexamined. His study is far more textual and focused on the linguistic aspects of the text than the rhetoric thereof. This fact is evident from his definition of rhetoric and rhetorical reading (Classen 2002: 45-46), which emphasizes 'understanding' the message, while 'appreciating' and 'explaining the function' of the parts as well as of the whole composition (Classen 2002: 46).

Classen (2002: 63) emphasizes the fact that this is a letter and not a speech. While this is true, it is equally true that ancient letter writers wrote in an oral, and even an aural, manner. Yes, in form it is a letter, but it is not merely a letter. The phenomenon of the so-called apostolic *parousia* is an accepted feature in New Testament scholarship. It has been demonstrated that the epistolary format also functions to communicate the apostolic presence. This phenomenon in part contributes to an appreciation of the literary format of New Testament letters. Classen's study does not consider this dimension

in his investigation. He appears to exclude the possibility that even letters can be employed with persuasive intent.

Moreover, this is not a comprehensive treatment of the whole letter. Several words and parts of sentences are left unexplained. This situation could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the author merely attempted to demonstrate rhetorical criticism using Titus because of its relative brevity. In other words, his intention might not have been to conduct a comprehensive analysis.

A surprising omission in Classen's enquiry is the silence on the theology of the letter. Whereas the majority of scholars, at worst, allude to the distinctive theological emphases of the letter, Classen's study, at best, hints at it (Classen 2002: 50-51). The reason why he seemingly misses or selectively mutes the evident theological emphases is not clear. Perhaps it is because he is so committed to prove the relationship of the various imperatives to the structure of the letter. As shown in the overview, he is probably overstating his case in this regard. Still, the theological sections are underplayed and what are highlighted are the orders given to Titus. The theological sections are interpreted as mere justifications for the instructions given to Titus. The references to possible rhetorical categories are limited to the end of his article and even then in only one sentence. Other classical rhetorical aspects—for example, pathos and ethos—are not considered.

### Phase 3: Growing Appreciation

Several recent articles addressing miscellaneous topics indicate a growing interest in Titus. 'Roman Crete and the Letter to Titus' (Wieland 2009) proposes the plausibility and actuality of Crete. 'A Saviour for the Cities of Crete' (Gill 2004) points to a Roman background for Titus. The structure and purpose of the letter gets a fresh take in 'Titus: Epistle of Religious Revitalization' (Tollefson 2000), 'Grace Manifest: Missional Church in the Letter to Titus' (Wieland 2005) and 'Titus as Apologia: Grace for Liars, Beasts and Bellies' (Kidd 1999). Titus 1.12, known as the liar paradox, continues to tantalize scholars (Gray 2007). These titles suggest that Titus has more to offer and requires further analysis.

### Conclusion

It is time to affirm the independence of Titus from 1 and 2 Timothy and to interpret it outside of the authenticity–inauthenticity debate. Current research appear inspired by antagonism rather than on the merits of the content of the letter itself. The contribution by Witherington III indicates the potential for further work on Titus. Developments in its theology, structure and cohesion, and rhetoric suggest the way forward in the study of the letter.

Further rhetorical and other analyses of Titus are commended because it will elevate the significance of this letter as one that can stand in its own right. In other words, stop viewing it as a supplement to the Timothean correspondence rather than a biblical text with its own contribution to make. Already there are calls from within the halls of academia for the three letters to be appreciated individually (Johnson 1996; Thurston 1999; Van-Neste 2002; 2003). I recently attended an international colloquium on the letter to Philemon. Since Titus is longer than Philemon does it not makes sense to afford the same honour to it?

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