

**PAUL THE BIGOT? READING THE CRETAN QUOTATION
OF TITUS 1:12 IN LIGHT OF RELEVANCE THEORY**

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Abstract

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According to prevalent readings of Titus 1:12, the author sympathizes with the statement, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” Such conventional, *prima facie* interpretations are unsustainable when examined in light of Relevance Theory (RT). Although its application to Biblical Studies has been limited, the Theory provides crucial insights for both evaluating previous interpretations and for guiding historically and linguistically responsible readings. I argue that key insights of RT illuminate critical evidence for properly interpreting the Cretan quotation of Titus 1:12. I aim to both clear an interpretive impasse regarding this problematic text and demonstrate a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic. The Introduction discusses representative interpretations and their inadequacies, then it outlines the promise of RT for supporting linguistically sound biblical interpretation. Each subsequent chapter focuses respectively on three pivotal insights: 1) the inferential nature of communication, 2) the role of the hearer in communication, and 3) the non-propositional dimensions of communication. I describe the insight in detail and demonstrate the impact of its application by both evaluating representative interpretations and offering a fresh interpretation of the passage in light of RT. The Conclusion summarizes the main contributions and implications of my thesis. These include a practical application of RT fundamentals to Biblical Studies; a linguistically-grounded examination of Titus and critique of existing secondary literature; a proposal regarding the letter’s historic message—namely, that it exposed rather than endorsed bigotry in the church; and an invitation to reassess the canonical esteem of Titus.

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For all God's gifts, with gratitude and love,

Isaiah Allen

Season of Easter 2019

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Abbreviations

For most abbreviations, see *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd Ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 117–260. SBL does not have a convention for the following:

- AERBD* Wit, Hans de, Gerald O. West (eds). *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue: In Quest of a Shared Meaning*. Vol. 32. Studies of Religion in Africa. Leiden: Brill, 2008
- ALH* *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*
- AP* Branco, António, Tony McEnery, Ruslan Mitkov (eds). *Anaphora Processing: Linguistic, Cognitive, and Computational Modelling*. Vol. 263. Current Issues in Linguistic Theory IV. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2005
- CSL* Cambridge Studies in Linguistics
- CTL* Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics
- EG* Köstenberger, Andreas J., Terry L. Wilder (eds). *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010
- Int.Rev.Prag.* *International Review of Pragmatics*
- Lang.Sci.* *Language Sciences*
- M&L* *Mind & Language*
- P&B* Pragmatics & Beyond, New Series
- PPP* Verschueren, Jef, Jan-Ola Östman, Marina Sbisà (eds). *Philosophical Perspectives for Pragmatics*. Vol. 10. Handbook of Pragmatic Highlights. Ebook ed. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2011
- RO-W* West, Gerald O., ed. *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*. Semeia Studies 62. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007
- RTAI* Carston, Robyn, Seiji Uchida (eds). *Relevance Theory: Applications and Implications*. P&B, 37. Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1998
- TCD* Dancygier, Barbara, José Sanders, and Lieven Vandelanotte (eds). *Textual Choices in Discourse: A View from Cognitive Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2012

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Introduction—Unresolved Issues in Titus 1:12 and the Promise of a Relevance-Guided Biblical Hermeneutic

I. Prevailing Interpretations of Titus 1:12

“Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons” (Titus 1:12b). The writer’s point is obvious: Cretans, *qua* Cretans are *ne’er-do-wells*. It is one of the New Testament’s more well-known quotations. Few biblical sayings have so firmly entered popular parlance and exhibited such cultural currency. So, *Cretan* has come to label someone wicked, untrustworthy, morally inferior, or reprobate.¹ This understanding of Titus 1:12 is almost irresistible. The epithet loses its geographic reference to the Mediterranean island of Crete and stands as a moral insult.

The Paul we know from Romans, Galatians, and even Acts would never have written such a disparaging statement about a tender, predominantly Gentile, congregation. He might more likely have opposed anyone who advanced such a notion. Therefore, scholars are justified to conclude that the historical Paul did not write Titus. The Apostle could marshal scathing language to defend or to shame, but Paul’s missionary strategy did not seem to involve sweeping insults of an intrinsic nature.² The conclusion that the Apostle Paul did not write Titus is as obvious as the interpretation of this passage. But, unexamined assumptions underlie this prevalent interpretation of Titus 1:12.

A Plausible Alternative Interpretation

As this study progresses, I will be exposing and explaining some of the problems with prevalent interpretations of Titus 1:12 on socio-historical, exegetical, and linguistic grounds and proposing what I think to be a simpler and more likely interpretation, one that attracted several earlier interpreters but that was dismissed through the history of interpretation on what I argue to be flawed assumptions.

¹ William D. Mounce, for instance, explains, “This verse ... has given rise to the colloquial use of ‘Cretan’ to describe a reprobate person.” See *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 398.

² Paul defends his congregations from opponents that he refers to as *the circumcision*: “I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!” (Gal 5:12, NRSV); “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh” (Phil 3:2, NRSV). He also defends them from greedy, presumptive leaders: “For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers ... his [Satan’s] ministers” (2 Cor 11:13–15, NRSV). Paul directly addresses a congregation: “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” (Gal 3:1, NRSV). Paul expresses each of these colorful rants to target a group for its problematic behaviors but not to berate his missionary congregations or to assert that they possess intractable faults.

My reading is as follows: In Titus 1:10–12, Paul described troublemakers in the Cretan church, most of whom were Jewish (μάλιστα οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς, 1:10). Divisive people (αἰρετικόν ἄνθρωπον, 3:10) disrupted the church (ὅλους οἴκους ἀνατρέπουσιν, 1:11) by teaching that Cretans, as Gentiles, were morally and religiously inferior. The troublemakers’ interest in genealogies, quarrels over Torah (γενεαλογία, μάχας νομικὰς, 3:9), Jewish myths (Ἰουδαϊκοῖς μύθοις, 1:14), and other trappings of Jewish religious culture reinforced an attitude of superiority over any who did not have credentials and tokens of status that were valid in their system—namely, Gentile Cretans. When Paul framed the famous quotation (1:12), he was completing his general description of the troublemakers with a specific and characteristic example of their teaching. The group from which the speaker that concerns Paul comes is the group of troublemakers. In their eyes, but not in Paul’s, this foul-mouthed bigot was a prophet (ἐξ αὐτῶν ἴδιος αὐτῶν προφήτης, 1:12a). The quotation may or may not have survived as a fragment of ancient Cretan literature. For the troublemakers, it justified their doctrine of ethno-religious inferiorization. Although we cannot confirm it, if a Cretan originated the saying, then anyone who used the slur could have pointed back with a shrug and said, “Even they speak this way about their own kind!” For Paul, the quotation contradicted the transformative power of the gospel (3:3–7), but he knew of a certainty (ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη ἐστὶν ἀληθής, 1:13a) that someone among the troublemakers (τις ἐξ αὐτῶν, 1:12a) was propagating it. Whoever was doing so and the community that encouraged them needed to be stopped and corrected (οὗς δεῖ ἐπιστομίζειν, 1:11a; ἔλεγκε αὐτοὺς ἀποτόμως, 1:13b). Although it is quite common for readers of this verse in Titus (1:12) to assume that Paul was participating in bigotry, I think that he may rather have been exposing and rebuking it. Over the course of this study, I trust that the reasons for considering this plausible reading and for calling into question key assumptions of other interpretations will become increasingly clear.

Many prevalent interpretations of this passage contradict my sense of the broad thrust of the Bible, the personality of the purported writer (Paul), and the message of the biblical book in which it appears (Titus). Its history of interpretation is contentious and riddled with contradictory proposals, making it a *problem passage*. Interpreters need consistent hermeneutical strategies to illuminate alternative possibilities.³ A strategy that

³ Anne Furlong argues that literary interpretation too often depends upon different interpreters accounting for a “different set of facts” (quoting Kiparsky). Hence, the need for a consistent hermeneutic. This concern

recommends itself to constituencies who approach the text from diverse starting points—whether denominational, scholarly, skeptical, or confessional; whether of a linguist, historian, theologian, or literary critic—could ameliorate contention.⁴ To develop such a strategy, I will explain three key insights from a well-tested theory of utterance interpretation (Relevance Theory) and demonstrate their practical application upon Titus 1:12 and representative interpretations thereof. The theory provides sound rationale for questioning some conclusions in preference to others and offers a hermeneutical foundation for reexamining the issues this passage presents. To appreciate prevailing interpretations of this passage in Titus, we must first understand some critical matters regarding the book.

The Provenance of Titus

Assumptions about provenance influence meaning even when interpreters give no explicit comment, extended attention, or intensive study to the issue. For Titus, the two crucial issues are authorship (*Who wrote it?*) and composition history (*What is it?*).⁵ Although my thesis is substantially unaffected by and, therefore, ambivalent about provenance, assumptions about these matters influence interpretation enough to require comment.

1. Authorship

The church has received the book of Titus as a letter by the Apostle Paul to his junior colleague, Titus, outlining instructions for church leadership and laity along with some moral and theological teaching. It has normally appeared with 1 and 2 Timothy, forming a trio that has been commonly designated the *Pastoral Epistles*, a *de facto* collection within the Pauline corpus of the New Testament canon.⁶ Throughout this study, I will use *Paul* as

applies to biblical interpretation, especially of *problem passages*. See “Relevance Theory and Literary Interpretation” (PhD Diss., University College of London, 1995), 36–37.

⁴ Tim Meadowcroft argues that Relevance Theory promises a “mediating category” by which to resolve some of the tensions between the critical environment of his scholarship as an Anglican and his Evangelical institutional setting. He aimed to “discover a hermeneutic that makes sense of the polarities and holds them together in some way.” See “Relevance as a Mediating Category in the Reading of Biblical Texts: Venturing Beyond the Hermeneutical Circle,” *JETS* 45 (2002): 611–27, at 613.

⁵ See Raymond F. Collins’s succinct introduction to his entry in “Pastorals – Biblical Studies,” Oxford Bibliographies Online, *Pastorals*, <http://www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0089.xml> (accessed 9/9/17).

⁶ These three books have been known as the Pastoral Epistles (PE) for as long as can be remembered. A similar designation goes back at least to Thomas Aquinas as per Charles K. Barrett. In the first instance, this

shorthand to refer to the writer without committing to any particular meaning for that name other than *the author of Titus*, which I avoid simply because it is clumsy.

Although other issues, such as views toward women and church organization, interest scholars of the Pastoral Epistles (henceforth, PE), Raymond Collins explains that “the issue of the authorship of the Pastorals has dominated scholarly investigation of these texts ... and the concomitant issues of interpretation that the views on authorship entail.”⁷ Modern scholars are dubious of the traditional provenance of Titus and the other PE.⁸ This uncertainty calls for a measure of tentativeness. Nevertheless, several factors, including certain principles of Relevance Theory (RT) that I outline below, make us optimistic about discerning authorial intentions by careful analysis.

Even while taking the PE to be pseudonymous, Annette Bourland Huizenga says, “Modern readers may still presume that he [the author of Titus] has painted a realistic picture of the structure and dynamics of at least some Christian communities of his own place and time. As a result, he formulates a representation that would be historically plausible to the earliest readers.”⁹ For this reason, modern readers should not dismiss the potential of these letters to illumine real historical issues. Towner makes a similar point: “The PE are recognized as presenting a coherent theological and ethical argument to a real church or churches somewhere in time.”¹⁰

label did not imply their compositional unity but their topical commonality. See *The Pastoral Epistles in the New English Bible*, New Clarendon Bible: New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 1.

⁷ Collins, “Pastorals.”

⁸ Statistical analysis was a factor that, especially in the 1970s through 1990s, swayed many to regard the PE as “un-Pauline.” See A. Dean Forbes, “Statistical Research on the Bible,” *ABD* 6 (1992): 185–206 at 204. He writes, “Most distressingly, we have repeatedly seen investigations embarked upon with sweeping claims of assent-demanding objectivity only to witness their ultimate invalidation through special pleading and selective attention to results. One need not be a statistician to detect when an outcome has hinged on a researcher/*thaumaturge* [wonder-worker] and audience blinking at critical moments.” Mounce, although generally ambivalent about authorship, nevertheless provides one of the most thorough critiques of style-based arguments against the authenticity of the PE. See *Pastoral Epistles*, xcix–cxviii. Problems reconciling known history with representations in the PE also influenced many to doubt their authenticity. But, concerning the correspondence between historical realities and even *authentic* literary reconstructions of them, James W. Aageson writes, “It would be a methodological fallacy to assume congruence between the two when there may in fact be little or none.” See *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church*, Library of Pauline Studies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 10.

⁹ Annette Bourland Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, ed. Sarah Tanzer, vol. 53 of *Wisdom Commentary*, ed. Barbara E. Reid (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2016), xlvi.

¹⁰ Philip H. Towner, “Pauline Theology or Pauline Tradition in the Pastoral Epistles: The Question of Method,” *TynBul* 46 (1995): 287–314 at 288.

Since assumptions about authorship affect interpretation and *vice versa*, it is equally as valid to form conclusions about authorship beginning with a close study of the text as to form conclusions about meaning from the standpoint of an assumed compositional history. The same stands for those who accept one of the numerous proposals for pseudonymity and also for those who view the letters as authentically Pauline. We may legitimately approach the question from either orientation—that is, authorship’s implications for interpretation or interpretation’s implications for authorship. I do not aggressively address this otherwise important issue, because the main contentions of my proposal will stand whether the book is authentically Pauline or pseudonymous. Like Aageson, I begin “by assuming neither the authenticity nor pseudonymity of” Titus.¹¹ Rather, I seek to discern the meaning of a passage on the basis of the available evidence. My research, nevertheless, bears implications for the question of authorship.

2. *Composition*

The commonalities of the PE prompt interpreters to consider how each letter addresses the themes they share. We do not, however, know the nature of their relationship, the direction of influence or dependency. The average reader may not realize how numerous and complex the proposals are of how these books relate to one another. Some hold that these were individual letters that the church collected and passed down as it had done with Philippians or Galatians.¹² Others suggest that portions of actual Pauline correspondence were incorporated into the documents.¹³ David Cook attacks this last theory—the *fragmentary hypothesis*—on the grounds that the purported “fragments” were in the same style as the rest of the compositions.¹⁴ I. Howard Marshall rebuts that an author incorporating fragments might cast them in his own style, therefore the style is not a

¹¹ Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*, 11. He refers to all three Pastorals.

¹² E.g., Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd rev. ed., vol. 14, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990); Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 35A, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2001). Claiming Pauline authorship does not make the history of composition, collection, and distribution simple, as can be seen in David Trobisch’s *Paul’s Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

¹³ For example James D. Miller, *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents*, SNTSMS 93 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Burton Scott Easton, *The Pastoral Epistles: Introduction, Translation, Commentary and Word Studies* (New York: Scribner’s, 1947); Robert Alexander Sir Falconer, *The Pastoral Epistles: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937); P.N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921). Why the fewest number of such fragments should appear in the longest of the letters (1 Timothy) suggests that this hypothesis is unsatisfactory as an explanation of origins.

¹⁴ David Cook, “The Pastoral Fragments Reconsidered,” *JTS* 35 (1984): 120–31.

decisive argument against the presence of fragmentary material.¹⁵ Nevertheless, scholars do not agree on which portions constitute authentic fragments and, therefore, cannot distinguish them from the rest of the material with confidence. The common view that these letters were written as a single composition possibly intended to simulate a private letter collection has influenced interpretation most profoundly and requires additional comment.

The most common assumption about the origins of the PE is that they were initially written as a single composition to imitate a personal letter collection. Philip Towner thinks that uncritical acceptance of this theory has biased interpretation.¹⁶ He argues that reading the letters solely as a corpus skews their individual meaning and reinforces the assumption that they are inauthentic and inferior without regard to their actual substance. Luke Timothy Johnson describes this prevalent theory:

The letters to Timothy and Titus are, therefore, not real letters in the sense that they were sent to actual individuals with the names Timothy and Titus, or even that they were composed separately and sent to anyone. Rather, the three “letters” actually form a *single literary production* in which each “composition” plays a distinct role. The “Pastoral Letters” are, in this understanding, not real correspondence, but the fictional rendering of a correspondence. Thus they are not to be read with reference to Paul’s letters (written some generations earlier), but only with reference to one another and, possibly, to other literature considered contemporaneous to their production.¹⁷

Even when commentators do not explicate their starting assumptions, the theory has influenced most modern scholarly interpretations of these books.¹⁸ As Johnson has opined,

¹⁵ I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 72–73. For an early and multi-faceted analysis of problems with the fragmentary hypothesis, see C.F.D. Moule, “The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: A Reappraisal,” *BJRL* 47 (1965): 430–52.

¹⁶ Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 27–28. David Trobisch advanced a proposal that Paul engaged in the conventional authorial practice curating and publishing his own letter collection. See *Paul’s Letter Collection*. Ancient letter collections typically contained letters that, although redacted, represented actual correspondence. The single document hypothesis requires that the PE did not circulate separately at all; their appearance as letters was a ruse.

¹⁷ Johnson, *First and Second Letters*, 79. Here and throughout this thesis all emphases are original.

¹⁸ Treatments of provenance are typically concerned with the implications of pseudonymity for *canon*, whereas my main concern is its implications for *interpretation*. These treatments are customary in the literature, and it is not necessary for me to revisit all of the issues here. The following scholars represent various angles: Terry L. Wilder argues against pseudonymity in principle. See *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception: An Inquiry into Intention and Reception* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004). David G. Meade considers kinds of and conditions for accepting pseudonymity. See *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition*, WUNT 39 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986). Armin Daniel Baum, examining several ancient critiques of irregular authorship claims (including in the PE), explains that apostolic

numerous readers believe the PE to be a forged letter collection because they were told so in college, not because they have personally examined them. He writes:

Little real discussion of the issue of authenticity still occurs. But I remind the reader that this consensus resulted as much from social dynamics as from the independent assessment of the evidence by each individual scholar. For many contemporary scholars, indeed, the inauthenticity of the Pastorals is one of those scholarly dogmas first learned in college and in no need of further examination.¹⁹

Johnson later argued “that the grounds for declaring them inauthentic are so flawed as to seriously diminish the validity of the scholarly ‘majority opinion.’”²⁰ Adopting the single document hypothesis profoundly influences how one interprets the PE, but the reasons for doing so are highly contested. So, in order to examine Titus afresh, I begin transparently with its literary self-presentation as an individual letter. The reasons for this choice will become clear.

Several scholars in recent years have argued, based on distinctions between the PE, that they were individual letters addressing specific local situations.²¹ Although not everyone gives the question extended critical energy, assumptions regarding provenance, nevertheless, underlie their readings. Interpreting passages from the PE without at least tacitly subscribing to some conclusion (often furnished by another, trusted scholar) about their compositional history is almost impossible. Concluding a survey on PE scholarship from 2000 to 2010, Marshall’s first point was that in recent years, “A number of writers

authorship was not a sufficient criterion for canonicity but that it was nevertheless a necessary one. See “Literarische Echtheit als Kanonkriterium in der alten Kirche,” *ZNW* 88 (1997): 97–110. Baum addresses the issue of stylistics, which is perhaps the most common angle of argument for or against PE authenticity in “Semantic Variation within the Corpus Paulinum: Linguistic Considerations Concerning the Richer Vocabulary of the Pastoral Epistles,” *TynBul* 59 (2008): 271–92. Baum offers his original assessment of the stylistic argument against Pauline authorship more fully in *Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung im frühen Christentum: mit ausgewählten Quellentexten samt deutscher Übersetzung*, WUNT 2.138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). According to Marshall, differing convictions about provenance do not utterly negate an solid evidence-based interpretation. He writes, “I do not think that at any significant point my exegesis is incompatible with a more conservative hypothesis regarding authorship.” See “The Pastoral Epistles in Recent Study,” *EG*, 268–312, at 274–5.

¹⁹ Johnson, *First and Second Letters*, 55.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

²¹ Rüdiger Fuchs, *Unerwartete Unterschiede: Müssen Wir Unsere Ansichten Über Die “Pastoralbriefe” Revidieren?* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 2003); Jens Herzer, “Zwischen Mythos und Wahrheit: Neue Perspektiven auf die sogenannten Pastoralbriefe,” *NTS* 63 (2017): 428–50; Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*. Marshall identifies others who argue the individuality of the letters. See “Pastoral Epistles,” 304–8.

are emphasizing the individuality of the Pastorals as three separate compositions.”²² He then summarizes their various reasons and positions. These scholars include James W. Aageson, Rüdiger Fuchs, Jens Herzer, Michael Prior, and Philip Towner.²³ Marshall shows that scholars representing several cross-sections of opinion on authorship and authenticity nevertheless argue for the individuality of the PE. Understanding Titus deeply involves wrestling with the questions of authorship and composition. In harmony with the general movement in PE scholarship toward seeing these letters as distinct compositions, this study treats Titus as an individual letter. This choice does not materially affect the linguistic aspects of my thesis; but it keeps my focus narrow, my parameters firm, and my approach transparent.

I will now explain and demonstrate how assuming the single document hypothesis described above unduly biases interpretations of Titus. The two issues stemming from this assumption that most profoundly affect interpretation are, first, the tendency to treat the concerns of all three PE as an undifferentiated amalgam and, second, the tendency to assume a lack of coherence in their structure and message. These tendencies have a self-confirming and self-reinforcing effect, but recent research questions them.

a. Amalgamation of the Pastorals

Assuming that the PE constitute a single literary composition has led to the amalgamation of their particular messages and personalities, conflicts and remedies. C. K. Barrett demonstrates the constraints of this conventional wisdom when he presumes to discuss “the false doctrine the author [of the PE] had in mind,”²⁴ as “difficult to ascertain,” because Barrett feels obliged to read the three books as a single work. Examples of homogenizing tendencies skewing interpretation are numerous, but one of the more unfortunate is when the theology of Titus is regarded as a static and lifeless *deposit*

²² The names identified here with the years of the works Marshall was interacting with are merely representative of the very thorough overview given in Marshall, “Pastoral Epistles,” 308.

²³ E.g., Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*; Fuchs, *Unerwartete Unterschiede*; Michael Prior, *Paul the Letter-Writer and the Second Letter to Timothy*, vol. 23, JSNTS (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989); Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*. This trend has not diminished since Marshall’s writing. Jens Herzer, has advanced the argument with additional evidence and analysis. See “Was Ist Falsch an Der ‘Fälschlich Do Genannten Gnosis’?: Zur Paulusrezeption Des Ersten Timotheusbriefes Im Kontext Seiner Gegnerpolemik,” *Early Christianity* 5 (2014): 68–96; and “What Is Wrong with the ‘Falsely-Called Gnosis’ (1 Tim 6:20)? The Transformation of Pauline Ecclesiology in Light of Rising Gnostic Movements.” (Conference Paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting—Program Unit: Disputed Paulines, Baltimore, MD, 2013). His ideas on the letters’ individuality have been incorporated into his quite recent “Zwischen Mythos und Wahrheit.”

²⁴ Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 12. Furthermore, Barrett (21) makes the odd connection that “Timothy must cease to abstain from wine” (1 Tim 5:23), *because* “To the pure all things are pure” (Tit 1:15), *rather than* by Paul’s own logic—“for the sake of your stomach and frequent ailments”!

(παραθήκη, 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12, 14), a word or idea that arguably does not represent Paul’s perception of the gospel in the Epistle to Titus, if even in the letters to Timothy.²⁵ Another error takes the argument from one of the PE to strictly interpret the other PE in spite of intra-contextual evidence. For example, Barrett says that, as far as the PE are concerned, “women have no place” in the ministry “from theological grounds (1 Tim. 2:13f...).”²⁶ He cites Titus 2:4, which does not contribute to the argument as Barrett frames it, but ignores 2:3, which instructs older women to be *good-teachers* (καλοδιδασκάλους)—i.e., teachers of what is good. In Titus, teaching is a leadership role.

Viewing these letters as a single composition and amalgamating their distinctives leads Huizenga to claim that “Indeed, the Pastorals assert that the organization of the whole cosmos is based on God’s οἰκονομία, ‘household management’ (1 Tim 1:4);”²⁷ even though that Greek lemma appears only in 1 Cor 9:17; Eph 1:10; 3:2, 9; Col 1:25; and 1 Tim 1:4 among all the NT epistles—a surprising distribution for a concept she considers both un-Pauline and pivotal to Titus. The lemma also appears in Isaiah 22:19, 21 (LXX) and Luke 16:2–4. Paul compares the *elders* (πρεσβύτερος, 1:5) Titus is supposed to appoint with a metaphorical *household manager* (οἰκονόμος, 1:7), but this is a different claim than Huizenga makes of a programmatic theology across the PE. Furthermore, οἰκονόμος also has a telling distribution in the NT: Luke 12:42; 16:1, 3, 8; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 4:1, 2; Gal 4:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 4:10. It is difficult to see this pattern as distinctively PE and un-Pauline. Whereas Marshall, Towner, and others consider topical redundancy in the PE a reason to doubt their original unity,²⁸ Huizenga claims that the author repeats material between the Pastorals “to add authoritative weight to his opinions.”²⁹ That significant concerns are *not* shared by some Pastorals casts doubt on this contention, which assumes that the Pastorals are more univocal about topics between component letters than Paul’s undisputed works. Furthermore, Huizenga’s claim that Paul articulates the nature of conflict in his undisputed letters but not in the Pastorals is not sustainable upon closer examination.³⁰ I explain below how the author of Titus is more specific than typically appreciated in identifying the cause of upheaval in Crete.

²⁵ For a representative example of this particular error, see *ibid.*, 31.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁷ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, xlii.

²⁸ E.g., Marshall, *Critical and Exegetical*, 1–2.

²⁹ *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 133.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xliv.

The single document hypothesis obscures the context of Titus, amalgamates its themes and concerns with the other PE, and stifles its unique voice. Marshall exposes an example of these problems when he discusses the relation of ἐγκράτεια (*discipline*, Acts 24:25; Gal 5:23; 2 Pet 1:6²; and cognates ἐγκρατεύομαι, 1 Cor 7:9; 9:25; and ἐγκρατῆς, Titus 1:8) and σωφροσύνη (*discipline* and cognates in Titus 1:8; 2:2, 4, 5, 6, 12; 1 Tim 2:9, 15; 3:2; 2 Tim 1:7). They are part of a cluster of virtues that, commentators repeat the claim, are both characteristic and distinctive of the PE. Marshall points out, however, that they do not have the same prominence or sense in 2 Timothy that they have elsewhere.³¹ He explains that ἐγκράτεια was common in Greek virtue lists but that it had less importance for Paul's concerns in the Pastorals as contrasted with his prolific use of σωφροσύνη and cognates in Titus and 1 Tim but not in 2 Tim.³²

As Johnson explains, some scholars disallow the undisputed Paulines from illuminating issues in Titus, even though these books share many themes and ideas.³³ Commentators commonly refer to the features of the PE as a whole, even when those features do not obtain in particular books. As Guthrie writes, "These three Epistles ... have always been treated as a single group."³⁴ For example, T. Christopher Hoklutubbe makes assertions about the PE on the basis of a fine examination of the presence and development of the language of *piety* (e.g., εὐσέβεια) as it appears in 1 Tim. He makes minimal reference to its development or presence in Titus or 2 Tim and shows minimal appreciation for this word group elsewhere (e.g., Rom 1:18, 25; 4:5; 5:6; 11:26; 2 Thess 2:4).³⁵ *The Pastoral Epistles* in the subtitle of Hoklutubbe's published dissertation could, therefore, mislead uncritical readers. Impressed by his thorough inquiry into 1 Tim and notions of *piety* in the ancient world, they might think that the same considerations obtain, not in the undisputed Paulines or other NT books, but evenly across Titus and 2 Tim. However, the actual distribution of εὐσέβεια does not unambiguously support this claim. We find two instances in Titus (1:1; 2:12) and eight in 2 Pet (1:3, 6, 7; 2:5, 6, 9; 3:7, 11). Although Hoklutubbe's argument that this word group was of special interest under Trajan and Hadrian is probably correct as far as coinage, inscriptions, and monumental history are concerned, its distribution across the NT canon seems ambivalent to this scheme. Compare

³¹ See *Critical and Exegetical*, 182–83.

³² *Ibid.*, 185.

³³ See *First and Second Letters*, 35A:79.

³⁴ See *Pastoral Epistles*, 19. He is correct as long as, by "always," he means *in the modern era*.

³⁵ *Civilized Piety: The Rhetoric of Pietas in the Pastoral Epistles and the Roman Empire* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017).

five instances of its cognate ἀσέβεια and none of εὐσεβεία in Jude (4, 15³, 18) with the pattern in Romans—four instances of ἀσέβεια (1:18; 4:5; 5:6; 11:26) and one non-prefix cognate (σεβάζομαι, 1:25). A key text from Titus where the cognates ἀσέβεια and εὐσεβῶς are used virtually as antonyms (2:12) casts doubt on the counter-argument that the presence of a common root does not entail a close relation of ideas.

The dual tendency to amalgamate the issues presented in Titus with those of the other Pastorals and to distinguish them carefully from the undisputed Paulines is methodologically unsound. This common practice leads to the assumption that these books have never had an independent life of their own but have always shared an identical historical and literary context. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned, a growing number of scholars propose that these books were written and circulated separately, even that they may have had distinct provenances in terms of place, time, authorship, and so forth.³⁶

The practice of harmonizing all PE polemic to present one vague, monolithic opponent to the PE community does not yield lucid interpretations. Careful observation reveals that the offending parties in Crete were distinct. Towner exposes the tacit treatment of the PE as a single, inseparable composition and shows that the amalgamation of opposition presented in each locale with that of the others is a problematic consequence of this tendency.³⁷ Derek Brown provides one of the many examples of this amalgamating tendency. In a recent paper, he omitted the fact that neither *Satan* nor *devil*, not to mention *false teaching per se*, appear in Titus to argue that the PE represent a marked development in the Pauline tradition toward attributing contrary doctrine to evil, non-human agents.³⁸ As I will show, Titus's opponents in Crete had specific characteristics and arguments.

Our ability to discern the exact nature of opposition in Titus is admittedly limited. On the surface, Paul does not articulate the troublemakers' teaching directly; rather, he derogates it with epithets such as *stupid*, *worthless*, and *empty* (3:9); and he instructs his delegates, Titus and the elders he appoints (1:5–9), to rebuke its practitioners (1:9, 13; 2:15; 3:9–10). As Barrett explains, “He was more concerned to combat the evil moral effect of his adversaries' teaching ... than to analyze their beliefs.”³⁹ Certain limitations

³⁶ E.g., William A. Richards, *Difference and Distance in Post-Pauline Christianity: An Epistolary Analysis of the Pastorals*, vol. 44, Studies in Biblical Literature (New York: P. Lang, 2002); Herzer, “Zwischen Mythos und Wahrheit.”

³⁷ See *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 27–36.

³⁸ See “Satan: The Author of False Teaching in the Pastoral Epistles” (paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting—Program Unit: Disputed Paulines, Atlanta, 2015).

³⁹ Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 12.

may prevent us from reconstructing the troublemakers' teaching and practices in satisfying detail, but we must be cautious not to carelessly mingle Titus's distinct portrayals with those of the other PE. Now, let us consider one other implication that stems from accepting the single-document hypothesis.

b. Incoherence of the Pastorals

Assuming that the PE are a literary unit, one rightly wonders whether they have a coherent, cohesive message. The question might not arise apart from the single document hypothesis.⁴⁰ If the PE are a patchwork of Pauline fragments arranged arbitrarily or were simply composed with very little attention to argument, then readers are under no obligation to discern a message. Barrett refers to a number of passages that P.N. Harrison considered to be authentic Pauline fragments within the PE as “artless—and in some ways pointless.”⁴¹ Some commentators are fashionably unimpressed with the “artless” Pastorals and view them as logically incoherent, impersonal, theologically and rhetorically impoverished.⁴² Several level the criticism that the Pastorals present an arbitrary and incoherent collection of material.⁴³ Anthony Tyrrell Hanson writes, “The Pastorals are made up of a miscellaneous collection of material. They have no unifying theme; there is no development of thought.”⁴⁴ Frances Margaret Young describes the general “scholarly estimate of the theology of the Pastorals” as “a fairly arbitrary, inconsistent, unthought-out amalgam with little coherence.”⁴⁵ Even advocates of Pauline authorship level such criticisms. Guthrie writes of the PE, “There is a lack of studied order, some subjects being

⁴⁰ If the PE constitute a single composition, a second question arises: *In what order they should appear?* The canonical ordering may not be original, as Quinn, Marshall, and others suggest, pointing to some manuscript evidence. Their order affects interpretation of the presumed whole. See Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus: A New Translation and Commentary and an Introduction to Titus, I and II Timothy, the Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 35, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 2–3; and Marshall, *Critical and Exegetical*, 1–2. Both Quinn and Marshall deliberately order their works to comment on Titus first, out of the canonical order, because they argue that their approach may follow the appropriate historical and literary order more closely. For both of them, however, the more pressing concern is pulling Titus out of 1 Timothy's shadow.

⁴¹ *Pastoral Epistles*, 11. He interacts with P.N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921).

⁴² E.g., Cook, “Pastoral Fragments,” 122. He argues against the Pauline nature of the Pastorals and attempts to foreclose the suggestion that any portion came from the hand of Paul. Moule generally agrees that they are “artless” (Barrett's term), but he attributes the artlessness to the hand of an amenuensis—Luke. I cannot agree that the hypothetical effect of Luke's involvement in writing “at Paul's behest” would have downgraded their quality. See “The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles,” 433–34.

⁴³ See references in Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in Interpreting the Pastoral Epistles,” *EG*, 1–27. See also Miller, *Pastoral Letters*, 61, 100, 139, *et passim*.

⁴⁴ *The Pastoral Epistles*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 42.

⁴⁵ *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 47.

treated more than once in the same letter without apparent premeditation.”⁴⁶ So, the books appear to lack the typical Pauline touch.

Recent arguments have critiqued these views. Commentators’ general agreement about the logical outline of Titus, in particular, has shown its straightforward organization. Ray Van Neste has extensively argued that the PE have a telling structure and logical coherence.⁴⁷ Although Lewis R. Donelson does not believe them to be Pauline, he recognizes that “the Pastorals appear to present carefully structured arguments which follow the paraenetic canons of their day.”⁴⁸ Most scholars consistently observe, especially in Titus, a simple logical outline.

A generation ago, after a flurry of renewed critical interest in the formerly drab PE, Donelson observed, “a change in mood on the Pastoral Epistles. No longer do scholars simply assume, as they did for several generations, that these letters are awkward combinations of diverse literary forms.”⁴⁹ In a review of Miller’s published dissertation, Towner points out that Miller acknowledged “the current trend in Pastorals research which maintains that the author of the Pastorals ... succeeds in communicating a dynamic message replete with coherent theological and ethical substance.”⁵⁰ Scholars increasingly appreciate the coherence of the Pastorals regardless of their stance on whether they are Pauline. Köstenberger quotes Marshall’s assessment that “there is a growing body of evidence that the Pastoral Epistles are not a conglomerate of miscellaneous ideas roughly thrown together with no clear plan, purpose or structure. On the contrary, they demonstrate signs of a coherent structure and of theological competence.”⁵¹ The critical move toward viewing the PE as separate compositions probably aids this perception.

Even if critics see the PE as artless compositions, attending to matters of theme and structure supports interpretation more than presuming their rhetorical poverty. Donelson

⁴⁶ *Pastoral Epistles*, 20.

⁴⁷ Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles*, JSNTSup 280 (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004); Ray Van Neste, “Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles,” *EG*, 84–104.

⁴⁸ Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen Zur Theologie 22 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 69.

⁴⁹ Lewis R. Donelson, “The Structure of Ethical Argument in the Pastorals,” *BTB* 18 (1988): 108–13; also cited in Van Neste, “Cohesion and Structure,” 87.

⁵⁰ Philip H. Towner, review of *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents*, by James D. Miller, *JBL* 118 (1999): 372–74; see Miller, *Pastoral Letters*. Miller otherwise uses the assumed incoherence of the PE as a starting point for his inquiries. I suspect, however, that interpreters may claim that a text is incoherent when they object to or have not grasped its message. Conflicting opinions cause one to question whether the artlessness ascribed to the letters is a matter of their composition or reception.

⁵¹ Köstenberger, “Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges,” 12. He quotes from Marshall, “The Christology of Luke-Acts and the Pastoral Epistles,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, ed. Stanley E. Porter et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 167–82.

presumes the need to “pretend to find another theological genius lurking in these rather pedestrian letters” as compared with what “we detect in [the undisputed] Paul;” yet he sees that they display a perceivable logic, albeit counter to Donelson’s reading of the authentic Paul.⁵² The expectation of encountering a coherent message comports with the approach of reading each letter on “its own terms” practiced and advocated by Aageson.⁵³

Describing his own approach to the PE, Aageson says that he “takes seriously the literary and conceptual world of each of the individual letters as discrete documents that have integrity in their own right.” He goes on to say, “This is not the case in much scholarship on the Pastorals. They are often treated as a Pastoral corpus, which disguises the substantive differences between them.”⁵⁴ Based on its form of presentation, he hears Titus as an individual letter prior to investigating peculiarities that may lead him toward some other theory of compositional origins.⁵⁵ Similarly, I treat Titus as a stand-alone composition with its own author, audience, and setting (both real and implied). I do not argue that it must only be read in this fashion; but I think that lucid interpretations depend on first hearing the book in its own epistolary context without undue influence from other texts, even the Pastorals.⁵⁶ The present form of Titus was composed at least to look like and implicitly be treated as a single epistolary composition. So, all else being equal, therefore, I take the literary-context of the letter itself to be the weightiest evidence in interpretation—before the “co-text” of the PE, the Pauline Corpus, and the NT.⁵⁷ Having outlined two broad issues that influence interpretations of Titus, I will now examine common interpretations of the Cretan quotation.

The *Prima Facie* Interpretation—Definition and Explanation

As with any biblical passage, interpretations of Titus 1:12 are diverse. No single reading prevails, but most readings feature several basic assumptions that I describe and evaluate below. To the extent that an interpretation adheres to this set of assumptions, I refer to it as

⁵² See *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 1.

⁵³ *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*, 11, 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁵ The tendency to amalgamate the PE places a burden upon readers of the secondary literature to sift through comments and assertions to discern their relevance or accuracy for individual letters. So, throughout this study, I present scholars’ comments on the Pastorals as comments on Titus to the extent that they apply without further qualification.

⁵⁶ Johnson also argues for this approach in *First and Second Letters*, xi, 14, 357, 369, *et passim*.

⁵⁷ See Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1996). I qualify my weighting of the evidence by acknowledging that external evidence can profoundly affect interpretation. This does not imply, however, that we can construe the book to mean something contrary to its intra-contextual assertions.

a *prima facie* reading. Although scholars in recent decades have approached this text with sensitivity and sophistication, most seem unable to escape the gravitational pull of the prevalent assumption that Paul tacitly sympathizes with the quotation's crude description of Cretans. Over the course of this study, I call this assumption into question. According to a *prima facie* interpretation, the Cretan quotation, irrespective of other factors, was also the substance of Paul's opinion of the Cretans; furthermore, he advanced the quotation's assessment of Cretans as the view Titus should have going forward in his ministry.

Whatever merits this letter might otherwise have, surely the presence of a truly bigoted remark would be a blemish upon the book, perhaps even an affront to the canonical Paul, the "apostle to the nations" (Rom 11:13) who would "become all things to all people in order to save some" (1 Cor 9:22). Titus has the tough luck of leading a community of existential reprobates. Jerome D. Quinn is representative of this reading:

With deadly seriousness the author of Titus has Paul vouch for the truth of the cruel ancient jibe, thus solemnly joining the witness of an apostle to the oracle of the prophet-poet. The latter is cited as 'a prophet' not only because the Hellenistic world so conceived him but also with an irony pointed at the Jewish-Christian troublemakers.

Quinn links his interpretation to a specific attribution in spite of the evidence he presents later that the quotation could not be traced to Epimenides or any other Cretan writer and that it was a narrow group of troublemakers that deserved rebuke, not the Cretan populace.⁵⁸

Given the influence of *prima facie* readings, it is not surprising that Huizenga fiercely critiques the consequences of that conventional interpretation and charts a reading strategy *against* the text:

What I ... find especially troubling is that the negative assessments of Jews, Jewish traditions, and the ethnic Cretans seem to have influenced several modern commentators to adopt a similar prejudice, which then leads to a tendency to read the rest of the letter as if it were written to a culturally and morally backward community.⁵⁹

The five features that characterize what I am calling a *prima facie* interpretation are as follows: 1) Paul's authorial sympathy with the quotation's linguistically-encoded contents, 2) contextual discontinuity between the thrust of the quotation and the surrounding material, 3) ancient literary or archaeological corroboration of the veracity of the quotation, 4) conflation of the troublemakers and the general Cretan church populace,

⁵⁸ *Letter to Titus*, 109.

⁵⁹ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 141.

and 5) dubious attribution of the quotation to Epimenides of Crete. Interpretations align with my *prima facie* categorization to the extent that they depend upon or emphasize some or all of these points. I will briefly describe each of the five features of a *prima facie* reading along with their weaknesses. Then, I will offer a more substantial critique while interacting with their adherents.

1. Authorial Sympathy

First, *prima facie* interpretations commonly assume the author's sympathetic attitude toward the contents of the statement as linguistically-encoded. So, Paul presumably had an approving attitude toward the statement, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons" (1:12). RT adds technical precision to this description. It asserts that linguistic expression is underdetermined, requiring readers to distinguish between linguistically-encoded propositional meaning and the speaker's intended meaning. Therefore, the speaker's attitude toward sentences is pivotal to utterance interpretation.⁶⁰

2. Contextual Discontinuity

Second, the *prima facie* reading requires an abrupt change in topic within the paragraph (1:10–16). Rather than the quotation functioning within a continuous argument against troublemakers in the Cretan church, Paul supposedly begins railing against ethnic Cretans mid-paragraph and returns to address presumptive leaders after this brief, *non sequitur* interruption. Whether or not commentators discuss the discontinuity between addressing inappropriate leadership and insulting the Cretan populace, this maneuver is assumed in most interpretations. The argumentative structure of Titus is otherwise so straightforward that it is surprising more interpreters do not question the break in thought assumed by the *prima facie* reading. Jerome (347–420 CE; *Comm. Tit.* 1.12–14), however, agonized over the presumed break in Titus 1:10–16. He could not see why such an insult would appear in the midst of Paul's otherwise continuous concern with belligerent Jewish leaders. In the end, he sided with Clement of Alexandria (150–215 CE; *Strom.* 1.14) on account of respect for his authority.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, "Pragmatics," *Cognition* 10 (1981): 281–86 at 281, *et passim*. See also Gene L. Green, "Relevance Theory and Theological Interpretation: Thoughts on Metarepresentation," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4 (2010): 75–90.

⁶¹ See Jerome's full dialogue on Titus 1:10–16 in *Commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). See telling excerpts in Peter Gorday and Thomas C. Oden, eds., *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 291.

3. *Ancient Corroboration*

Third, many scholarly adherents to a *prima facie* reading assume that ancient literary or archaeological testimony objectively and unambiguously demonstrates that the Cretan people actually were or were purported to be just as the quotation describes. Several commentators search, find, and present evidence that appears to corroborate the linguistically-encoded view of the quotation. In which case, Paul supposedly joined a host of critics and echoed the verdict of history—namely, *Cretans are innately delinquent*. Significant methodological problems accompany this approach. Commentators present ancient literary reports of Cretan malfeasance to show that some Cretans at some time in history were accused of some kind of wrongdoing or an inclination toward it. Those writers typically are not careful either to correlate the nature of the reported wrongdoing with the moral concerns of the quotation and of the book of Titus or to correlate the era of the reported wrongdoing with the era of the book of Titus. It suffices them merely to find any ancient evidence that harmonizes with negative stereotypes toward Cretans, even when the broader context of the evidence does not suggest that Cretans were of special concern to the ancient writer. Anna Strataridaki argues, in agreement with early twentieth-century classical historian and archaeologist Henri Van Effenterre, that “no good reason exists for these people to have had a bad name either in their early history or in later times.”⁶² Furthermore, commentators typically do not demonstrate that the Cretans were *more* despised or *more* accused than people of other ethnicities or that the same amount of disparaging material could not also be found for any ethnicity if one searched for it. I will critique specific examples in greater detail as they arise.

4. *Conflation of Targets*

Fourth, several prominent interpreters conflate all targets of Paul’s critical rhetoric so that their interpretations do not maintain the categorizations established in the discourse itself. The block quotation from Huizenga at the beginning of this section exemplifies this tendency.⁶³ Paul seems to vocalize criticisms of various categories of people and practices. For instance, he references features of Jewish religious culture (*circumcision* 1:10, *commandments* 1:14, *genealogies* 3:9), troublemakers in the church (1:10–11), and—through the quotation—native Cretans. Interpreters, however, tend to read the negative

⁶² “Epimenides of Crete: Some Notes on His Life, Works and the Verse ‘Κρητες Αει Ψευδοται’” (Rethymno: University of Crete, 1988), 14.

⁶³ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 141.

judgments surrounding the Cretan quotation as levelled against all of these groups.

Tracking the corrective logic of Titus requires more careful attention to exactly whom Paul targets. RT illuminates the need and process for interpreters to assess when an author is writing *descriptively* or *interpretively*—when their words represent their own opinions or those of others.

5. *Dubious Attribution to Epimenides of Crete*

Fifth, and finally, most commentators who discuss attribution assume that a fifth- or sixth-century (BCE) Cretan poet, Epimenides, originated the quotation, but this is far from assured. The quotation has no reliable attribution. Modern writers invoke his name over-confidently, but ancient authors painted a vague and contradictory picture of his era, occupation, and characteristics. They hardly provide the kind of evidence to support strong assertions that Paul borrowed authority from a well-known Cretan to lend credibility to an insult he wished to level against Cretans. None of Epimenides's writings remain extant, so we cannot verify the claim. Furthermore, some scholars have advanced other ancient writers for consideration. The five tendencies described above comprise the quintessential array of assumptions for what I call *prima facie* readings. Most interpretations of Titus 1:12 rely on some or all of them. I will now address critical problems with these readings.

Critical Problems and Representative Examples

The *prima facie* interpretation has been an invisible accomplice in many unsustainable interpretations of Titus 1:12. Most treatments of the passage require or assume some level of adherence to this surface reading. The secondary literature on Titus exhibits diverse hermeneutical approaches, so I have selected several representative interpreters with whom to engage regarding the critical issues I raise. I will demonstrate that available evidence challenges interpretations that rely on *prima facie* reading assumptions. Subsequent chapters will show that these are also questionable when examined in light of RT.

1. *Contextual Problems*

Scholars recognize that the pejorative essence of the Cretan quotation contradicts the canonical image of Paul. What is less commonly acknowledged is that it also conflicts with its immediate and book context in Titus. The *prima facie* reading presents problems at four levels of context: immediate grammatical context, discursive paragraph context, compositional book context, and broad literary-canonical context. Whereas Reggie M. Kidd claims that the quotation is programmatic of Paul's moral instructions throughout

Titus and tries to ameliorate the apparent topical breach without undermining the conventional reading,⁶⁴ I argue that the contextual features I describe below and the foundational assumptions of the *prima facie* reading are incompatible. They cannot both be sustained. I introduce the problems here and revisit them throughout the study.

First, accepting the *prima facie* interpretation risks causing readers to overlook the grammar of the passage and assign unsuitable values to words. Second, it results in readers assuming that the writer diverts from his topic, thus muddying up one of the most vivid and incisive passages in Titus. Third, it leads readers to distort the epistle’s moral and theological instruction in order to comport with a degraded view of the Cretan congregations. Fourth, and finally, adhering to that surface reading discounts the weight of the literary-canonical context of Titus—that is, the conceptualization of persons, places, and situations inherited by its writer and readers. Below, I describe each of these four contextual problems and provide some examples.

a. Overlooking the Grammar of the Immediate Context

Adherents to a *prima facie* reading often overlook some aspects of grammar in the immediate context. George W. Knight, for example, without explaining the unusual maneuver, assigns *Cretans* as the referent of *their* (αὐτῶν) in 1:12.⁶⁵ Because Huizenga aims to locate and expose aspects of the Pastorals that may be construed as negative toward the disenfranchised, she takes special interest in the quotation.⁶⁶ Even though Paul attributes the quotation to someone else, Huizenga pins it directly on him: “One of his most offensive tactics is to put into writing an ethnic insult.”⁶⁷

The relative pronoun in Paul’s statement *whom [someone] should silence* (οὓς δεῖ ἐπιστομίξειν, 1:11) clearly refers to the troublemakers introduced in the previous verse and not to Cretans in general. Nevertheless, some scholars conflate these groups. In a single paragraph, Jouette Bassler writes, “Through it [the Cretan quotation] the opponents are dehumanized (Gk. *kaka thēria*; NRSV: ‘vicious brutes’), and the accompanying instructions are to muzzle or gag them (Gk. *epistomizein*; NRSV: ‘silence’). Moreover, all

⁶⁴ “Titus as Apologia: Grace for Liars, Beasts, and Bellies,” *HBT* 21 (1999): 185–209.

⁶⁵ *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 298–99.

⁶⁶ Huizenga is transparent about the purpose of her commentary and the Wisdom series. See *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, xli–lii.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

Cretans are included in this brutal condemnation.”⁶⁸ What Bassler refers to as “accompanying instructions” appear four clauses earlier, so she confuses the object of Paul’s criticism. Bassler asserts that Paul was condemning both the troublemakers in Crete whom Paul identifies as a particular group (1:10–11) and the entire Cretan populace. If all Cretans are included, then the instruction to gag them is absurd, especially as a missionary strategy. This reading also renders Paul’s description of the troublemakers extraneous and misleading (1:10–11).

An often ignored or tacitly mis-assigned pronoun within the context provides another example of grammatical contextual problems with the *prima facie* reading: Paul instructs Titus to rebuke certain people severely, using the personal pronoun *them* (αὐτοὺς, 1:13). This usage prompts the question, *Whom is Titus expected to rebuke?* Interpreters usually assume that the pronoun refers either to Cretans or to presumptive leaders in the Cretan church, with whom Paul seems to be concerned (1:9b–12a). *Is Paul instructing Titus to sternly rebuke an entire ethnic group on the basis that they are genetically vicious?* This seems offensive, ridiculous, and implausible. *On the other hand, if Paul is instructing Titus to rebuke the troublemakers of 1:10–11, then why assign them as the referent to the personal pronoun in 1:13 but not in 1:12?* Commentators do not adequately address this dilemma. Wolfgang Stegemann, following the first option, says that Paul “assumes that all members of the ethnic group of the Cretans have negative characteristics, which disqualify them morally and in the end place them outside the human race.”⁶⁹ William D. Mounce follows the second option by recognizing that the rebuke of Titus 1:13 is aimed at the troublemakers of 1:10–11 but then paraphrasing the verse exactly as follows: “‘rebuke them [the Cretans] sharply’ (Titus 1:13).”⁷⁰ He mistakes the referent of this pronoun (*them*, αὐτοὺς, 1:13) for the target of the derogatory quotation (1:12b). Mounce recognizes the comparisons and contrasts between the Cretan population and troublemakers within the church who held distorted views of Cretans (*à la* the Cretan quotation), but he conflates the troublemakers in specific with the Cretans in general. For Mounce, the object of rebuke includes the very people disparaged by the Cretan quotation, but he does not address Paul’s concern with those who were disparaging them.⁷¹ Thomas Aquinas considered the troublemakers of 1:10–11 worthy of rebuke, but he justified it

⁶⁸ Julette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 190.

⁶⁹ Quoted by Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 140.

⁷⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 392.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 408, 438.

based on 2 Tim 2:14 rather than Titus 1:13 nearby. He also typifies the *prima facie* reading by assuming a shift in topic between 1:11 and 1:12 and missing the continuity between Paul's concerns with ethno-religious bullies and his rebuke throughout 1:10–16.⁷² We now address perceptions of such contextual shifts.

b. Assuming a Topical Diversion within the Paragraph Context

After the epistolary introduction, the first chapter of Titus focuses on leadership—good (1:5–9) and bad (1:10–16). Mounce explains that *for* (γάρ, 1:10) connects the paragraph under examination (1:10–16) with the preceding (1:5–9).⁷³ The macro relationship between the paragraphs is one of hortatory substantiation—instructions followed by rationale.⁷⁴ Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders of noble character in each town (1:5–9) *because of* the presence of presumptive leaders (1:10–16). Titus 1:10–16 primarily concerns these troublemakers, their moral character and behavior, what Titus is supposed to do about it and why.

Writers can move from topic-to-topic freely and without warning, but they customarily relate one sentence to another in sensible and transparent ways or mark off diversions with caveats and resumptive words or phrases—for example, the resumptive discourse functions of οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν in 2 Cor 12:2, 3 or καί in Eph 2:6. The *prima facie* reading allows for scant contextual relations between the contents of the quotation and the surrounding sentences. Commentators do not seem to question their assumptions when they affirm that Paul jumps from one topic to another in Titus 1:12 with almost no sense of continuity. Paul, however, seems to have thought that his presentation of the quotation had a clear logical relation to the material both before and after, using resumptive logical connectives and cross-contextual referentials such as the personal and relative pronouns of 1:12–13, which I will discuss in Chapter One under the heading *Basic Pragmatic Processes*.

In contrast to the dense structure of 1 Tim, which meanders through diverse topics with negligible traces of logical or thematic progression, Titus's structure is fairly

⁷² *Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 2007), 164–165 (comments on Titus 1:10–16). I have not seen a commentator correlate the disqualification of bullies (πλήκτης, Titus 1:7) with the behaviors of the troublemakers in Crete—e.g., *upsetting entire households* (ὅλους οἴκους ἀνατρέπουσιν, 1:11). Paul's instructions concerning moral character and behavior do not form in a vacuum; they correlate to Titus's actual context.

⁷³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 395–96.

⁷⁴ For descriptions of such logical relationships, see David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 107–8.

transparent. Its organization and argument are relatively easy to grasp, except when readers tacitly assume a topical diversion between 1:12 and its surrounding verses. Huizenga recognizes that “Jewish opponents [are] mentioned in 1:10 and 1:14;” but she assumes that the verse in the very middle (1:12) is Paul’s statement against Gentiles.⁷⁵ In Chapter Two under the heading *Salience for Original Audiences versus Modern Eavesdroppers*, I propose one reason why readers see a diversion here.

Rather than seeing a topical diversion, Mounce conflates the subjects of Paul’s complaint about the troublemakers in 1:10–11 with the subjects of the Cretan quotation in 1:12b.⁷⁶ He is correct that the vices of children that disqualified their parents from becoming elders (1:7) paralleled the troublemakers’ traits (1:10–11), but he does not adequately distinguish between the very specific designation Paul gives of the troublemakers—*especially those from the circumcision* (μάλιστα οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς, 1:10)—and the much more generic subject of the quotation—Κρηῖτες (*Cretans*, 1:12).

c. Distorting the Moral and Theological Instruction in the Book Context

Paul does not transparently develop a concern with gluttony, laziness, or even lying as such later in Titus.⁷⁷ He does, however, evoke relations between Jews and Gentiles and between Christians and the society around them. The troublemakers impressed ethnic Cretans with a sense of religious and moral inferiority. The power brokers of the religious community questioned Cretan legitimacy. When Paul mentions Jewish religious and cultural interests, he addresses the contention that Gentiles could not be full members of the Christian community without attending to the traditions of Jewish religious culture—*circumcision* (1:10) chief among them.⁷⁸ Rather than seeing Paul develop the ethical instruction of Titus in this palpable social context, many commentators take their cue from the *prima facie* interpretation of the quotation and assume that Paul’s subsequent admonitions are remedial and defensive.⁷⁹ Some scholarly treatments of Titus imply that its ethic is primarily informed by concerns for legitimacy in the broader world rather than

⁷⁵ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 173.

⁷⁶ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 390, 392 (comments under Titus 1:7b and 1:9b).

⁷⁷ *Contra* Kidd, “Titus as Apologia,” 185–209; and Riemer A. Faber, “‘Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons’: A Neglected Theme in the Epistle to Titus,” *WTJ* 67 (2005): 135–45.

⁷⁸ See Chapter Two under the heading *Contextual Assumptions*.

⁷⁹ Beyond the scope of this thesis, the paraenesis of Titus is far more nuanced than generally appreciated, and its soteriology is profoundly transformational.

the gospel itself. In other words, the ethics of Titus is about Christian public relations and damage control.⁸⁰

d. Discounting the Literary-Canonical Context of Titus

Most scholars assume that the audience of Titus did not have direct personal knowledge of Paul and Titus and knew them primarily as literary and historical figures. Therefore, appreciating the contribution that Titus makes to the NT canon involves understanding how it presumes the audience's familiarity with inherited notions of Paul and Titus. Robert Wall explains that the author of Titus, in an attempt to carry on the "Pauline Apostolate" for new generations of Christians with relevant adjustments for his contemporary church, relied on the audience's knowledge of Paul from other canonical scriptures.⁸¹ Therefore, we rightly ask, *What feature of Paul's literary persona in the NT is more prominent than that he was the "Apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13); the one who memorably said, "I have become all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:20–22) and "The same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles" (Gal 2:8)?*

Although they may articulate it in different terms, most scholars judge that the literary-canonical context of early Christian writings is more relevant to the interpretation of Titus than the socio-historical context of Paul's actual relationship with Titus during his lifetime. If they are right, then it is reasonable to suspect that the author of Titus intended to evoke Paul's subversions and objections to ethno-religious stratification as seen in his undisputed writings (*à la* Gal 3:28; 4:17; 5:3–4, 12; Phil 3:2-7). Furthermore, it is reasonable to consider how the author might have portrayed Paul as subverting, not endorsing, the bigotry evident in the Cretan quotation. A *prima facie* reading overlooks this literary-canonical aspect of Titus.

Suppose the pseudonym aimed to evoke the authentic Paul to the extent he could. He may have bumbled Paul's style or contradicted Paul's theology in subtle ways, but interpreters hardly noticed for hundreds of years—the deception was so convincing. If not personally, then the pseudonym knew Paul through his letters and perhaps through Acts.⁸² Based on these, no biographical attribute seems more prominent than Paul's radically

⁸⁰ E.g., Kidd, "Titus as Apologia"; and Hoklotubbe, *Civilized Piety*. I discuss this more in Chapter Three under the heading *Ethics and Redemption in the Sound Doctrine of Titus*.

⁸¹ Robert W. Wall and Richard B. Steele, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 332, *et passim*.

⁸² Mounce finds it curious, "In light of the frequent scholarly distrust of the reliability of Acts, it is interesting that here its reliability becomes the standard against which the PE are judged." See *Pastoral Epistles*, lxxxv.

inclusive mission to the Gentiles. Some commentators have even gone so far as to consider specific undisputed Pauline texts anti-semitic (e.g., Gal 2:21; 3:10; 5:12; Phil 3:2).⁸³ Likewise, based on the treatment of Jewish religious culture in Titus (e.g., 1:10, 14; 3:9), several scholars label the author anti-Semitic.⁸⁴ It, therefore, seems unreflective to claim that the author was using the Cretan quotation to disparage the island's primary (Gentile) ethnic group. Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann explain that the Cretan quotation serves "to add local flavor" to the pseudonymous epistle by peppering it with concrete ethnic references and a famous slur, thus reinforcing the ruse of Pauline authorship.⁸⁵ But, *Does the pseudonym do so by having Paul assert something that everyone knows is out-of-character for the Apostle? Whose reconstruction of the Apostle Paul would disparage his missionary population? A writer capable of the literary accomplishment, ethical argument, and theological coherence of Titus could have portrayed a more passable Paul. Yet, this problem only exists for the prima facie reading.*

2. Social and Historical Problems

Now that I have critiqued a sample of the literary contextual problems with a *prima facie* reading, I will consider some of the social and historical problems. I have organized these under two headings—first, I will address critical issues with *prima facie* readings at a social level, then I will examine some of the efforts of scholars to bolster such interpretations.

a. Social Implications of the Prima Facie Reading

The Cretan quotation invites easy categorizations of the *other*. Huizenga claims that Paul "has simply adopted the common perceptions about Cretans that designate them as the 'other.'" Accordingly, Paul's "rhetoric serves to set them apart from 'good' Greeks and 'good' Romans and now excludes them from the category of 'good' Pauline Christians."⁸⁶ Having heard the quotation, one no longer needs to wonder about the character of Cretans. This ready refrain will be at-hand alongside "Never trust an elf!" (spoken by a dwarf from

⁸³ Pamela M. Eisenbaum, "Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?" *Cross Currents* 50 (2001): 506-524. She acknowledges ambiguity in several passages but ultimately argues that Paul was not antisemitic.

⁸⁴ Wolfgang Stegemann, "Anti-Semitic and Racist Prejudices in Titus 1:10-16," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett, trans. David E. Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 271-94; Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 141; Jay Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles through the Centuries*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 192.

⁸⁵ *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 135.

⁸⁶ *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 141-42.

Middle Earth) and “Ferengi are greedy, misogynistic, untrustworthy little trolls” (spoken by a human from Star Fleet). One has no reason to doubt the assessment until they are encountered. Titus, however, was supposed to encounter ethnic Cretans daily, so *How was this quotation supposed to serve his mission?*

Despite Paul’s famous inclusivity and accommodating ministry, according to Mounce, Paul abandoned his signature missionary strategy when it came to the Cretan church. *Why?* Mounce says that it was because “the Cretan social standards were evidently so low that there was, in essence, nothing to which Paul could accommodate.”⁸⁷ Paul himself was, after all, “A person who says that Crete is full of liars, evil beasts, and gluttons.”⁸⁸ Mounce clearly holds some assumptions of the *prima facie* reading. He writes, “The problems in Crete are those expected of a young church in a pagan environment. Paul wants their salvation from lives of sin (Titus 1:12–13...).”⁸⁹ This diagnosis obscures the ethno-religious character of the problems to which Paul alluded (1:10–16; 3:9–10). Although Paul pointed to Jewish believers (1:10–12), Mounce essentially agrees with the quotation’s assessment that the problem with the church in Crete was its pagan converts (i.e., Cretans) and their commensurate degradation.

Stegemann acknowledges the Jewish religious interests of Paul’s opponents; but, instead of concluding that they would have favorable attitudes toward Jews and unfavorable attitudes toward Cretans, he considers all ethnic references to contribute to a singular, generalized bigotry. He blends Paul’s correctives, writing of Titus 1:10–16, “the rejected group is connected with *implicit* prejudices about Judaism and *explicit* prejudices about the Cretans.”⁹⁰ Huizenga pits Paul against the entire local population, without differentiating Paul’s argument as for or against specific constituencies, when she writes, “He assumes that his audience will agree with his depiction of his opposition (‘those of the circumcision,’ Cretans, and others) as belonging to the broad category of ‘corrupt and unbelieving...detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.’”⁹¹ These writers conflate the purveyors of bigotry with its targets.

Another example of the social problems with *prima facie* readings comes from Jerome Quinn. The quotation appears to have come from a poetic source—it is a Greek

⁸⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 418.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, lxi.

⁹⁰ Stegemann, “Anti-Semitic and Racist,” 284; see also 273, 280–91.

⁹¹ *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 142.

hexameter sentence, the first strophe of which appears extant in a hymn by Cyrenian poet and scholar Callimachus (310–240 BCE; *Hymn*. 1.8–9). Quinn, therefore, notes its poetic features and attempts to convey its aesthetic nature in a more conventional English form:

Liars ever, men of Crete,
Nasty brutes that live to eat.⁹²

Re-poeticizing the quotation may help English readers to appreciate its aesthetics, but it has dubious value for interpretation. First, the quotation had already been excised from its poetic context to function as a crude slur. Second, recapturing the poetic effect does not solve the problem of why Paul mentioned the quotation in a context addressing leadership malpractice.

Conclusions that follow from accepting the *prima facie* interpretation are alarmingly prejudicial. Marshall characterizes the Cretan church as one “struggling to break free from depraved patterns of behavior, such as were widely associated with Crete.”⁹³ Even though Greg A. Couser acknowledges that Paul’s main conflict in Crete had “a Jewish, law-based flavor,” he assumes that Paul used the quotation to judge Cretan culture: “What stridency we find arises from the potential threat and, maybe more so, the challenge posed by the Cretans’ cultural heritage (or lack thereof, 1:12).”⁹⁴ Couser thus demeans Cretan culture. Johnson writes, “the unsavory character of the local population that was already suggested . . . becomes explicit: even a native Cretan prophet testified truly to their coarse and evil ways.”⁹⁵ Tacitly sympathetic to the quotation’s negative view of Cretans, Johnson asks of instructions for young women in Titus 2, “Is this a sign of the savageness and incivility of the native population, that responses ordinarily thought to be ‘natural’ should require teaching?”⁹⁶ These comments are merely representative. I could list dozens more, but I have chosen scholars who are recognized authorities. Doubtless, reading the text in this way has affected people’s opinions about Cretans. Some take it even further, however, and attempt to prove the validity of a *prima facie* reading.

⁹² Quinn, *Letter to Titus*, 97.

⁹³ Marshall, *Critical and Exegetical*, 165. Replace *Crete* with any contemporary social label (e.g., gender, race, religion, ethnicity), and Marshall’s words become offensive, yet scholars accept such statements when they refer to Cretans.

⁹⁴ Greg A. Couser, “The Sovereign Savior of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus,” *EG*, 105–36.

⁹⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Letters to Paul’s Delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, *The New Testament in Context* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 228.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

b. *The Scramble for Corroborating Evidence*

Several interpretive problems in Titus 1:12 came to light when Anthony C. Thiselton vehemently criticized commentators' dubious practice of garnering evidence for the historical accuracy of the attitude expressed in the Cretan quotation in a scathing 1994 article.⁹⁷ Many scholars essentially try to corroborate the *prima facie* reading through evidence in ancient literature and archaeology.⁹⁸ Thiselton objected to the modern quest to demonstrate that the quotation's assessment of Cretans was historically justified. First, the quest fails on historical grounds, because the evidence is weak. Second, the quest fails on literary grounds, because it asks the wrong question. Huizenga also critiques this quest:

The value judgments of Cretan culture as untruthful and gluttonous (and thus, rudimentary, corrupt, savage, uncivil, etc.) do not arise from any "sociological" studies of the population but rather from the simple proverbial sayings and ancient reports. It is impossible for later readers to tease out the facts about life on Crete during the Roman Empire, and we cannot know the cultural realities for various people and groups when they are framed in such polemical and stereotypical ways.⁹⁹

The scramble to find corroborating evidence for the *prima facie* interpretation represents a misuse of socio-historical critical methods. Scholars have attempted to gather historical evidence that implicates Cretans in any kind of wrong-doing that can be found—regardless of the kind of wrong-doing or its chronological distance from the era of Titus.

Mounce assumes that Paul shared the view of Cicero (106–43 BCE) who wrote in Latin more than one hundred years earlier than Titus that "Moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans ... consider highway robbery honorable" (*Rep.* 3.9.15).¹⁰⁰ Titus 1:12, however, does not mention any kind of theft or assault. Patrick Gray infers that Odysseus's impersonation of a Cretan man in the second half of the *Odyssey* (14.41–199) reflected the prevalence of Cretans' unfavorable reputation, but such a conclusion is not strongly suggested by the context. The impersonation begins at line 199, but the story is favorable or ambivalent to Cretan moral character. The whole purpose is to build up the drama of Odysseus and what he went through to survive the Trojan War and to protect his identity. Gray, however, overplays his assumption: "So pervasive is this view of Crete that it finds its way into the pages of the NT. The author of the Letter to Titus describes the

⁹⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, "The Logical Role of the Liar Paradox in Titus 1:12, 13: A Dissent from the Commentaries in the Light of Philosophical and Logical Analysis," *BibInt* 2 (1994): 207–23.

⁹⁸ E.g., Stephen M. Baugh, "Titus," in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 499–511; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 397–99.

⁹⁹ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 141.

¹⁰⁰ Translation from Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 418.

local population as ‘always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’”¹⁰¹ Yet, it is uncertain that an ancient prejudice about Titus’s missionary outpost, as reflected in classical Greek myth, aids interpretation here. Commentators, nevertheless, accumulate evidence to support the notion that Cretans historically were vicious or were at least considered to be so by an ancient writer. Baugh gathers evidence of Cretan malfeasance (e.g., piracy, treason), but his examples do not correspond to the specific moral concerns of the quotation or come from a close historical period or geographic location.¹⁰²

Interpreters often must distinguish between a writer mentioning someone else’s opinion and expressing her own. Exodus 5:7–9 provides an analogy. Pharaoh considered the Hebrews to be lazy liars, but scholars have generally known better than to seek historical justification for that opinion. They understand that it was expressed within a context that reveals it as an unreliable claim, revealing more about the Pharaoh’s attitude toward the Hebrews than about the Hebrews themselves. Seeking corroborating evidence for the veracity of Pharaoh’s opinion from ancient writing and archaeology would rightly be critiqued as anti-Semitic; and, to Huizenga’s point above, *Could any truly relevant, representative, or useful data really be found from such a quest?*

Chiao Ek Ho presents an incriminating list of offensive Cretan actions: “known for its warring cities, piracy, wild pagan worship, and immoral practices. Lying was apparently regarded as acceptable in Cretan culture; thus the coining of the term κρητίζω (from the island’s name, Crete [Κρήτη]), which means ‘to play the Cretan,’ that is, ‘to lie.’”¹⁰³ Ho derives most of these behaviors from archaeological and literary depictions which are geographically and chronologically removed from first-century CE Crete, and he includes some behaviors that do not coincide with the quotation. He may establish that certain people at some point considered Cretans to be wicked people, and historical evidence may assert that some Cretans did bad things. *Does Paul rightly disparage them then?* According to Ho, Paul uses the quotation for straightforward description. He seems to be neglecting the more relevant question: *What is Paul doing with this quotation?* Ho’s only comment on its rhetorical thrust is that Paul contrasts Cretan *liars* (ψεῦσται, 1:12) with the *unlying God* (ἀψευδὴς θεός, 1:2). Although Ho argued in his doctoral thesis that

¹⁰¹ Patrick Gray, “The Liar Paradox and the Letter to Titus,” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 302–14.

¹⁰² Baugh, “Titus,” 499–511.

¹⁰³ Chiao Ek Ho, “Mission in the Pastoral Epistles,” *EG*, 241–67.

Paul was always controlled by a “missionary outlook” in the Pastorals, this *prima facie* interpretation does not trouble him.¹⁰⁴

Aside from its unsavory ring, two additional counterpoints deflate attempts to historically prove the moral reprobation of Cretans: First, the biblical portrayal of Cretans, although not prolific, is generally not negative (see 1 Macc 10:67; Acts 2:7–11; 27:7–13, 21). Second, one may scour written history with a selective brush, to locate unflattering commentary about any selected ethnicity (e.g., see comments below on Cicero, *Republic* 3.9.15). Anyone with a search engine can muster a collection of disparaging judgments against a given ethnicity from its detractors and its internal critics and, thus, rally literature and archaeology to censure an ancient or modern category of people—just enter the term.

Such pursuits constitute confirmation bias more than truly discovery-oriented socio-historical research. Although he does not speak in terms of *confirmation bias*, Thiselton argues that commentators have been grasping for “further empirical grounds” to validate the content of Paul’s supposed assertion.¹⁰⁵ They want to verify it historically, but doing so requires a speculative reconstruction of Paul’s, Titus’s, and the Cretans’ cultural exposure to the writings and histories of writers widely dispersed in time, space, and discipline (e.g., philosophy, history, poetry, geography). Besides this limitation, the approach also ignores historic literature that is positive about the Cretans.

The moral teaching in Titus may amount to a lifestyle *apologia*, as Kidd argues. In the context of the letter, however, this aspect of ethics is predicated on Paul’s operating assumption that Cretan society *is* morally discerning and *is* concerned with reputation. Kidd does not make a strong enough case that the moral concerns of the quotation align with Paul’s moral instruction elsewhere in the letter. Along with others that I critique in this section, Kidd pairs disparate evidence as he relies on some of the literary evidence I re-assess below (e.g., Pliny, *Nat* 8.83; Plutarch, *Inim. util.* 86C) while arguing that the triad of Hellenistic moral virtues in 2:12 are a corrective against the triad of Cretan vices in 1:12.¹⁰⁶

Those who assert that Cretans were historically notorious often do not match their evidence with the moral issues that the quotation raises, diminishing the applicability of their claims. The quotation’s only other extant form besides Titus seems to echo a

¹⁰⁴ Chiao Ek Ho, “Do the Work of an Evangelist: The Missionary Outlook of the Pastoral Epistles” (PhD Diss., University of Aberdeen, 2000).

¹⁰⁵ “Logical Role,” 211.

¹⁰⁶ “Titus as Apologia,” 186, 190, *et passim*.

misunderstanding, not an actual offense. The initial phrase, *Cretans [are] always liars* (Κρηῆτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται), appeared in Callimachus, *Hymn*. 1.8–9. In this poem, Callimachus accused Cretans of being superlative liars; because he supposed that they claimed to possess the tomb of the immortal Zeus, who cannot die. The tomb in question was actually for a Cretan man named Zeus. John Calvin, citing ancient interpreters, explained that the quotation’s initial claim was based on this historical misunderstanding. He, nevertheless, took the quotation at face value as Paul’s opinion of the Cretans, commenting on Titus 1:13, “Paul accepts the truth that he has spoken, for there is no doubt that the Cretans ... were very wicked men. The apostle ... would not have spoken so harshly of the Cretans without the best of reasons.”¹⁰⁷

Even though Greek historian Polybius (200–116 BCE) was specifically criticizing Crete’s libertine land ownership and private property rights with the biased voice of a time in Crete hundreds of years removed from the NT era, Mounce considers Polybius’s comments pertinent: “Greed and avarice are so native to the soil in Crete, that they are the only people in the world among whom no stigma attaches to any sort of gain whatever” (Polybius, *Hist.* 6.46).¹⁰⁸ Polybius was not critiquing Cretan character but the liberality of their laws that made it possible for citizens to secure unusual wealth. His comments are pertinent not to Titus 1:12 itself but to a *prima facie* interpretation of it and only when removed from their literary and historical context. Mounce also cites Greek writer Plutarch (46–120 CE); but the context of that story, although including stereotypical disparagements of Cretans, pivots to show that the story’s villain is actually cheating a band of mercenary Cretans—an act referred to as κρητιζῶν πρὸς Κρηῆτας (*Cretanizing the Cretans*, *Aemil. Paul.* 23).¹⁰⁹

Mounce also cites a narrative by Livy (c. 64 BCE–c. 12 CE) in which, first, he told of Perseus’s talented and trusted Cretan Lieutenant being unable to finish a rallying speech because the Macedonian crowd saw their king’s grief and, then, he told of a mishap in which underpaid Cretan mercenaries accidentally sank a ship they were trying to board (*Ab*

¹⁰⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas Forsyth Torrance, trans. John W. Fraser, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 249–50 (comments on Titus 1:13).

¹⁰⁸ See *Polybii Historiae*, ed. Theodor Büttner-Wobst, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1889), 295–97; translation from *Histories: Polybius*, trans. Evelyn S. Schuckburgh (New York: Macmillan, 1889); cited in Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 397.

¹⁰⁹ Plutarch, “Aemilius Paullus,” in *Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae*, ed. K. Ziegler, 2nd ed., vol. 2.1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1964), 184–222; translation from Plutarch, “Aemilius Paulus,” in *Plutarch’s Lives with an English Translation*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, vol. 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918).

Urbe Condita 44:45).¹¹⁰ The narrative mentions Cretans but is not about Cretan character in general. Various ancient writers may have stereotyped the Cretans and other ethnic groups as vicious, but such does not prove their actual reprobation or get Paul off-the-hook for bigotry simply because others shared his supposed opinion.

Commentators cite Cicero's *Republic* (3.9.15) to corroborate the view that ancient people had little esteem for Cretans.¹¹¹ Within the same literary context where Cicero refers to Cretan acceptance of "piracy and brigandage," however, he also lists the supposed moral concessions of Egyptians, Gauls, Athenians, Lacedemonians, Carthaginians, and others. Scholars typically cite the portion that is unfavorable toward Cretans; while, in the larger section, Cicero was highlighting differences of opinion among nations of the world, rather than accusing any single nation of having an intrinsically and objectively corrupt character. No ethnicity is exempt from accusation or bigotry. Aside from the fact that these were hearsay accusations and historically removed by one hundred or more years from Titus, they also do not coincide with the kinds of moral degradation mentioned in the Cretan quotation. I, therefore, question the applicability of this evidence to the task of interpretation.

To emphasize how common human corruption and intrigue was in *every* nation, Plutarch mentioned a rumor that Crete alone did not have any haunts for wild animals. The rumor is also found in a naturalistic context by Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), who said, quite without any negative connotations toward the people of Crete, that the island seems to have "no baneful animal," except a certain spider (*Nat.* 8.83). Plutarch's original point was that depraved humans were so much more common than depraved animals, that there was even a nation that was rumored not to have the latter—although it certainly had the former. Plutarch continued, "A government which has not had to bear with envy or jealous rivalry or contention—emotions most productive of enmity—has not hitherto existed" (*Inim. util.* 86C); that is, *every* nation exhibits these negative features. Quinn embellishes Plutarch's meaning concerning Crete not having wild beasts as evidence that Cretans, above other nationalities, are vicious people. Quinn writes, "The poet asserts that the human beings there give the lie to that belief. They are beasts of prey, not working for their food but idly

¹¹⁰ See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 397.

¹¹¹ E.g., Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 198; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 418.

prowl about for something to satisfy their hunger.”¹¹² Following Quinn, Mounce writes, “While most countries had to deal with wild beasts, in Crete the same problem was posed by people who, in the absence of wild animals, assumed the role themselves.”¹¹³ These connections emerge not from a careful reading of Titus or other ancient literature but from the assumptions that pertain to a *prima facie* interpretation. They are, nevertheless, representative of mainstream scholarship on the topic. Grasping for historical narratives that sketch a generally negative portrait of the Cretans has led even the most respectable scholars toward biased and irrelevant sources that do not really help us to understand what Paul is doing with this quotation.

The scramble to find corroborating evidence does not even reckon with the fact that a great deal of material in the ancient world was complimentary toward Crete and Cretans. For instance, Polybius commended the Cretan governmental constitution (*Hist.* 6.43). In a modern analogy, many supporters of U.S. President Donald Trump scrambled to cover for him when he reportedly called a category of nations “sh*thole countries” in a closed-door meeting, where he thought his words would remain private.¹¹⁴ Like the scramble to corroborate Paul’s supposed negative opinion of the Cretans, these supporters attempted to rationalize Trump’s words. Among their excuses and explanations, defenders said he was justified because he was referring to sanitation facilities. Others simply rebutted that he was expressing the deplorable condition of certain nations.¹¹⁵ In this defense of Trump, as in the *prima facie* interpretation, adherents attempt to marshal real-world facts to justify a prejudicial statement rather than acknowledging that the statement had a pragmatic sense beyond the semantics of the sentence. The quest to reinforce highly selective knowledge of

¹¹² Quinn, *Letter to Titus*, 108; Quinn and others take more ancient references out-of-context to support the *prima facie* reading than I have room to deal with.

¹¹³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 398.

¹¹⁴ Ali Vitali, Kasie Hunt, and Frank Thorp V, “Trump Referred to Haiti and African Nations as ‘shithole’ Countries,” *NBC News*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-referred-haiti-african-countries-shithole-nations-n836946> (accessed 2/19/18).

¹¹⁵ Joan Walsh, “Why Donald Trump Said ‘Sh*thole Countries,’” *The Nation*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.thenation.com/article/why-donald-trump-said-shithole-countries/> (accessed 2/19/18); MyNewsGH.com, “Trump Justified to Call African Countries Sh*tholes – A Plus,” *GhanaWeb*, January 15, 2018, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Trump-justified-to-call-African-countries-shitholes-A-Plus-617741> (accessed 2/19/18); Eugene Scott, “In Defense of Trump’s ‘Sh*thole Countries’ Comment, His Surrogates Invoke the ‘Model Minority’ Myth,” *Washington Post*, January 13, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/01/13/in-defense-of-trumps-shithole-countries-comment-his-surrogates-invoke-the-model-minority-myth/> (accessed 2/19/18); Andrew Prokop, “The ‘Sh*thole Defense’ Explained: How Trump’s Allies Are Trying to Dig Him Out of His ‘Sh*thole,’” *Vox*, January 16, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2018/1/16/16897016/trump-shithole-shithouse-countries> (accessed 2/24/18).

ancient Cretans with additional facts even when those facts are in most other ways irrelevant can be misguided and embarrassing. *So, what are the alternatives?*

3. *Inadequate Solutions*

Interpreters tend to accommodate their readings to *prima facie* assumptions largely without questioning them. Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, for instance, attempt to illuminate Titus with sensitivity to “an array of social sciences such as anthropology, social psychology, sociolinguistics, and the like;”¹¹⁶ but they reiterate dubious assumptions that are foreign to the text, attributing the Cretan quotation to Epimenides, advancing already-ancient and—they admit—oblique legends of Cretan malfeasance, and the author’s sympathy with the quotation’s linguistically-encoded propositions. “The Pastor concurs!” they exclaim.¹¹⁷ Their readers do not derive new insights regarding the Cretan quotation, because their “social-science” approach leans upon the accretions of interpretive history.

Several scholars recognize that the contents of the quotation seem to correlate to Paul’s concerns with the troublemakers, but they still generally assume that Paul tacitly and uncritically holds a negative view of the Cretans. Towner, for instance, concludes that Paul employs the quotation to highlight a comparison between the proposition of the quotation and the behavior of the presumptive leaders (1:10–16) as well as a contrast with a good leader’s character (1:5–9). This is likely the case, but Towner betrays the power of the *prima facie* reading to influence interpretation when he goes on to assume that Paul was *also* providing a description of the Cretan population. Towner suggested that households were being disrupted by “dangerous teaching that was tinged with Cretan permissiveness (and other elements more Jewish perhaps).”¹¹⁸ “Cretan permissiveness” does not appear in the context of the text on which he is commenting but is only visible on the basis of assuming Paul’s sympathy with the quotation. The silent accomplice of *prima facie* reading also emerges when Towner says that instructions to older women in ch. 2 were “to show themselves as older wives who had successfully emerged from the Cretan way of life.”¹¹⁹ In the end, most scholars concede a reading that requires Paul to either tacitly agree with or even advance an extremely negative and essentially bigoted view of the Cretan ethnicity.

¹¹⁶ Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Deutero-Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), xi.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹¹⁸ Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 697.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 724.

In its original, lost context, the quotation could have had many possible meanings other than a simple slur, such as irony, sarcasm, humor, lament, or political jab. I suggest that the passage portrayed Paul as recognizing the out-of-context use of this quotation. I will argue that he exposed those who violated both its original literary meaning and, more importantly for Paul, the Cretans' self-valuation. Although this quotation influenced other people's view of the Cretans, its context in Titus suggests that Paul was also troubled by its power to affect Cretans' view of themselves. They considered themselves inferior to Paul's opponents on ethno-religious bases. Ben Witherington, III proposes that this jab is directed only against leaders who were ethnically Cretan, but this view does not comport with the fact that Paul does not portray the troublemakers of Titus 1:10–11 as primarily of Cretan ethnicity or that the syntax of the quotation or its frame does not clearly target them.¹²⁰

Most readers readily acknowledge a disjuncture between the attitude of the Cretan quotation and the reputation of the Apostle Paul. The broader ethical, theological, and anthropological teachings of Titus, especially as represented in the gospel summaries of 2:11–14 and 3:3–7, understand God's activity in history and in individual lives to be redemptive and transformative. The *prima facie* reading and its accompanying assumptions do not countenance such change.

The text of Titus exhibits more subtlety than the *prima facie* reading allows, but scholars continue to hold some of its doubtful assumptions. Thiselton, for instance, proposes that Paul presented a classic logical paradox, a deliberate contradiction to expose the severe limitations of language to truthfully define people. Thiselton explains that, in order to reset the controversy in Crete, Paul demonstrated the absurdity and futility of labelling selves and others on account of the asymmetry between third- and first-person speech.¹²¹ Paul indicated that the quotation was spoken in the third person. On the lips of a Cretan, however, it could be taken ironically, humorously. A “liar paradox” was a device well-known and enjoyed in antiquity. Thiselton rightly insists that identifying the group to which Paul's speaker belonged is essential to interpretation. I discuss this germane point in Chapter One under *The Speaker's Attitude toward a Sentence*. Thiselton explains that the grammatical distinction between first- and third-person speech leads to a logical conundrum that uncovers Paul's real point—the Cretans had been mislabeled as

¹²⁰ *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John*, vol. 1, Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 122–24.

¹²¹ “Logical Role,” 221.

irredeemably vicious, which would be a problem for the gospel in Crete. According to Thiselton, Paul wanted his audience to see that first-person self-contradictions are unreliable means of labelling persons. But, Paul seems to be more disturbed by this group of troublemakers than Thiselton's explanation suggests. He did not ask for a cordial apology; rather, he ordered a stern rebuke (1:13). Thiselton's proposal also depends upon assuring the attribution of this quotation, which is demonstrably unreliable.¹²²

I find three fundamental assumptions of Thiselton's proposal problematic: First, his interpretation assumes that Paul draws the quotation from a Cretan, specifically Epimenides. This attribution is uncertain but necessary for his reading. The self-contradictory logic of the liar paradox disintegrates in the mouth of a third-person speaker. It is not certain that Paul pointed to the speaker of this statement as someone other than a contemporary troublemaker; the possible ancient origins of the quotation do not appear to concern Paul. Thus, Thiselton acquiesces to one of the key premises of the *prima facie* reading. Second, his interpretation requires that several of the pronouns in the context have an unusual usage (e.g., cataphoric, rather than anaphoric; resumptive, rather than continuative) or difficult-to-process referent (e.g., null or distal). I will discuss the pronouns of the passage in Chapter One under *Referentials*. Third, his view requires multiple steps of reasoning and considerably specific background knowledge to process properly, making it less plausible if a more straightforward interpretation is available. I will discuss processing costs and multi-step reasoning in Chapter Three under *The Economy of Cognitive Effects*.

As I will explain in more detail in Chapter One under *Higher-Level Explicatures*, distinguishing between a quotation's *use* and initial meaning in an original context and its *mention* by a speaker in a new context is integral to interpretation.¹²³ A certain Cretan Epimenides may have been its initial author, and its initial context may have invoked a *liar paradox*, but these possibilities do not assure Paul's own concerns with the quotation in its biblical context. Marshall discusses some of the difficulties in placing who this Epimenides might have been: no extant works exist, and ancient writers referred to their Epimenides in various eras and in descriptions that do not quite fit what little context Paul provides.¹²⁴ I

¹²² Ibid., 219–221.

¹²³ I italicize *use* and *mention* here, because they are technical terms in Relevance Theory. See Ken-Ichi Seto, "On Non-Echoic Irony," *RTAI* (1998): 239–56; Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, "Irony in the Use-Mention Distinction," in *Radical Pragmatics*, ed. Peter Cole (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 295–318.

¹²⁴ *Critical and Exegetical*, 199–201.

contend that the quotation was scavenged from its original, perhaps ironical or humorous, context and co-opted by troublemakers in Crete as a slur to reinforce their teaching of Gentile inferiority.

I have shown how scholars assume that Paul's use of the quotation simply aligned with general negative attitudes toward Cretans. To Mounce, for instance, the quotation stood on its own as Paul's indictment against them, "in agreement with the worldwide reputation of the Cretans."¹²⁵ This claim, however, does not comport with Mounce's structural observation that Paul contrasted ideal leaders in 1:5–9 with the "opponents' characteristics" in 1:10–16.¹²⁶ The troublemakers' *behavior* was just as much in view as their character, and referring to genealogies in 3:9 further suggests a hereditary-ethnic dimension to the problem. Mounce recognizes that Paul objects to those "who taught Jewish myths and human commandments (1:10–16)," but consider how degrading the Cretan populace (1:12b) might have expressed an ethno-religious superiority myth against which Paul contended.¹²⁷

Some scholars attempt to reconcile the Cretan quotation to the surrounding literary context (1:5–16) regarding leadership responsibilities, qualifications, and deficiencies in Crete. Kidd highlights what he sees as a chiasm encompassing all of the moral material of Titus. The attempt does not aid or harm his main argument. The moral concerns of the quotation are, in fact, not prominent in the rest of the book.¹²⁸ The *prima facie* reading and its corollary assumptions, however, retain much of their influence.

Several unproblematic claims about the Cretan quotation fit under the following descriptions: First, some demonstrate that the substance of the quotation compares with the behavior of the troublemakers of Titus 1:10–16.¹²⁹ Second, some contend that Paul employed subtle uses of logic and rhetoric to subvert the surface meaning of the quotation.¹³⁰ Third, many recognize the thrust of the quotation as inherently disparaging, although they pursue different solutions—e.g., harmonizing it with Paul's other concerns for the church¹³¹ or highlighting prejudicial attitudes elsewhere in the book.¹³² These

¹²⁵ *Pastoral Epistles*, 404.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 406, 413, 416.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 408.

¹²⁸ "Titus as Apologia," 185–209.

¹²⁹ E.g., Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates*, 225–9; Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 74–6, 699–700.

¹³⁰ E.g., Thiselton, "Logical Role;" Gray, "Liar Paradox;" Thomas G. Long, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, *Belief: A theological commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016), 263–67.

¹³¹ E.g., Kidd, "Titus as Apologia;" Faber, "'Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons.'"

¹³² E.g., Stegemann, "Anti-Semitic and Racist;" Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*.

helpful intermediate conclusions do not unambiguously lead to a satisfying understanding of Paul's use of the quotation. One thing that gets in the way, as I have shown, is that each interpreter succumbs to one or all of the questionable assumptions of the *prima facie* reading.

Paul's use of the Cretan quotation is mainly a question for those who are interested in Titus at the level of *ostensive communication*—uses of words that have communicative intent, as opposed to various forms of “word salad,” logs, or other forms of writing not intended to convey a coherent message. The fuller phrase *ostensive inferential communication* is always implied, because of the inferential nature of all communication.¹³³ Some approaches to Titus do not set out to ascertain its meaning within its context as a distinct literary production with communicative intent. Among these are those that assume the fragmentary nature of the Pastorals or their artless assembly. “In modern scholarship,” Jay Twomey writes, “They have compared the innovation of Paul to the traditionalism of the Pastor, and they have found the Pastor wanting.”¹³⁴ Attempts to contextualize Paul's use of the quotation, under such views, are misguided and futile. Extracted units of meaning that would otherwise be the building blocks of an argument only serve to answer anachronistic questions.¹³⁵

The view that the Pastorals are a patchwork of Pauline fragments and/or late first- and early second-century traditions crudely cobbled together has lost currency. Scholars now generally accept that they were composed with coherence and purpose. The coherence of Titus involves a clear contextual progression: a paragraph on the trouble with presumptive leaders (1:10–16) fittingly follows a paragraph on appointing good leaders (1:5–9), affecting an immediate and satisfying logical contrast. I have seen no evidence to suggest that 1:10–16 or any part thereof is an interpolation, and the quotation occurs in the *middle* of this paragraph. My attempt to interpret it within its immediate context stands substantially unaffected by conclusions to the effect that the passage is fragmentary. The question still remains: *Why insert the quotation here?* If one is predisposed toward the

¹³³ Italicized for its technical significance, referring to the “stock and trade” of Relevance Theory. See, e.g., Billy Clark, *Relevance Theory*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 112–19; Robyn Carston and Seiji Uchida, eds., *Relevance Theory: Applications and Implications*, P&B 37 (Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1998), 298. See Chapter One.

¹³⁴ *Pastoral Epistles*, 4. See Miller, *Pastoral Letters*. For a thorough argument against the PE containing even a remnant of authentic Pauline material, see Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*.

¹³⁵ E.g., the detailed but fragmented approach toward the quotation by Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 135–7.

prima facie interpretation, then Paul might appear to have gone off on an inexplicable tangent within the context of 1:5–16. I am more inclined to question our own modern prejudices in reading than to dismiss the ancient author’s writing as erratic. The author presented the book of Titus as a letter from Paul, which, in addition to any other approaches employed, calls for a reading strategy that wrestles constructively with the literary context and implied historical setting. If we presuppose that features of the text contribute more or less to a contextual argument, then exposing a pseudonymous writer’s strategies for achieving credibility can only *partially* illuminate the rationale for including any portion (e.g., the Cretan quotation). Therefore, to the extent that scholars view features in the Pastorals, such as the Cretan quotation, as mere reinforcement for the ruse of Pauline authorship, they leave the question of meaning unanswered.¹³⁶ Now that we have seen how various interpreters defy some, but not all, of the assumptions of a *prima facie* reading, we will examine one critical assumption in greater detail—the historical attribution of the Cretan quotation.

4. Problems with Historical Attribution

The over-confident assumption that Paul’s Cretan quotation comes from Epimenides, a Cretan poet of the fifth- or sixth-century BCE, is not an assured fact. Even ancient writers confuse exactly who Epimenides was; and none of Epimenides’s writings remain extant, so we cannot confidently verify the claim. Several ancient commentators attributed at least a portion of the quotation to another figure, and some modern scholars have advanced other ancient writers as the originators of the sentence.¹³⁷ The quotation has no reliable attribution.

Clement of Alexandria was the first to attribute the quotation to Epimenides of Crete (*Strom.* 1.14). Following him, Jerome and Socrates of Constantinople (380–439 CE) also said that it was excerpted from the works of Epimenides. If this attribution is correct, then it suggests that the original context was poetic, perhaps ironic, caustic or humorous, but unlikely merely descriptive. J. Albert Harrill, however, suggests that Clement

¹³⁶ Several writers view concrete segments in the PE, including the Cretan quotation, as serving mainly to evoke historical vividness. E.g., Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 135–37; Cook, “Pastoral Fragments,” 122–23. Donelson suggests that the scenario of Titus in Crete was invented based on Acts 27. See *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 61. In contrast, Mounce contends that, if the Pastorals represent the generation after Paul handing down tradition, such assumptions do not adequately account for references in these letters that anticipate reunion between Paul and his delegates. See *Pastoral Epistles*, lviii.

¹³⁷ E.g., G.M. Lee, “Epimenides in the Epistle to Titus (1:12),” *NovT* 22 (1980): 96; George Leonard Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry from Eumelos to Panyassis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 81–82.

originally made this attribution casually and that it is not reliable. Harrill writes, “This identification of Epimenides as the original author of the text comes to Clement as obvious, showing no signs that Clement is aware of any debate over the attribution.”¹³⁸ Jerome seems to depend on Clement but to consider the precise attribution unimportant (*Comm. Tit.* 1.12–14). In the discourse, “On the Emperor’s Prohibiting Christians Being Instructed in Greek Literature, [etc.],” Socrates may also be dependent on Clement’s claim when he refers to “the oracles of Epimenides” (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.16). After describing a process of elimination undertaken by Jerome (following Origen, whose commentary on Titus is no longer extant), Harrill explains that Jerome reasoned Epimenides of Crete was “that island’s most famous poet.”¹³⁹ In other words, they came to these conclusions apart from any emphasis on Paul’s part. Succeeding generations of commentators followed this well-established lead in spite of its dubious nature, until it became the majority opinion. Jerome explicitly resists Clement’s attribution on account of the grammatical context of the passage but accepts it on Clement’s authority (*Comm. Tit.* 1.12–14). Quinn acknowledges that Jerome’s attribution to Epimenides was tentative, based on a second-hand *report (dicitur)*.¹⁴⁰ Towner writes, “But in fact the attribution of the saying to [Epimenides] is somewhat uncertain.”¹⁴¹ Some pre-modern authors represent early countervailance to the now-conventional attribution to Epimenides. Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428 CE) was one of several who identified Callimachus, and not Epimenides, as the originator of the quotation.¹⁴²

Commentators who seek historical or literary justification for the offensive saying have difficulty explaining why it appears in its present context. Mounce writes, “It is somewhat surprising to find such a strong condemnation in the letter, offensive as it would

¹³⁸ See “‘Without Lies or Deception’: Oracular Claims to Truth in the Epistle to Titus,” *NTS* 63 (2017): 451–72, at 453.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 458.

¹⁴⁰ *Letter to Titus*, 107. Witherington also recognizes the citations of Clement and Jerome but not Jerome’s ambivalence about the attribution. See *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 122–24. Marshall suggests that Irenaeus might have considered Paul to be quoting from a known Greek author if the similarity between Irenaeus’s Homeric quotative framing (*Haer.* 4.33.3) and that of Titus 1:12a were deliberate, but we cannot verify whether this was the case. See *Critical and Exegetical*, 199, fn. 129.

¹⁴¹ *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 700.

¹⁴² Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Minor Pauline Epistles*, ed. Henry Barclay Swete, vol. 2: 1 Thessalonians-Philemon, Appendices, Indices, 2 vols., Theodori Episcopi Mopsuesteni, In Epistolas B. Pauli Commentarii: The Latin Version with the Greek Fragments (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), 243; also in English translation Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Minor Pauline Epistles*, trans. Rowan A. Greer, vol. 26, Writings from the Greco-Roman World (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

have been to the Cretans.”¹⁴³ Thiselton’s criticism is incisive: In sum, the writer is not using the quotation descriptively of the Cretans at all; and a search for real-world evidence that Cretans, as distinct from any other ethnic group, should be portrayed in such vicious terms is misguided.¹⁴⁴ Marshall is one of a few commentators who briefly discuss the cloistered debate regarding attribution; but, in the end (and after unsatisfying argument), he pronounces, “We are left with some uncertainty But the probability is that the author thought that he was citing Epimenides.”¹⁴⁵ Lorenz Oberlinner indicates that there are two problems regarding attribution: who originated the quotation and what was meant in its original context. The second may have no importance for Paul, but Oberlinner, like Harrill, suggests that the traditional attribution to Epimenides may have simply been convenient.¹⁴⁶ Clement (*Strom.* 1.59.2) was the earliest writer to attribute the quotation to anyone beside Paul’s contemporaries, and he may have grasped for Epimenides as the only or the most famous Cretan poet he knew.¹⁴⁷ *What harm could it cause?*

a. *Who Is Epimenides?*

Supposedly, a Cretan poet named Epimenides was speaking about people of his own ethnicity—whether it was in lament, humor, irony, or something else cannot be ascertained. Numerous commentators on Titus rely on or mention the typically unexamined attribution to Epimenides, but we cannot say with confidence exactly who he was. Multiple Cretan Epimenides are known from antiquity—a philosopher, a diviner, and possibly a poet as well, although ancient writers have confused them with each other (Plato, *Leg.* 1.642, D–E; Aristotle, *Ath. pol.* 1–2; *Rhet.* 3.17.10). Plutarch described a certain Epimenides as a seventh-century BCE Cretan priest whose cultic genius was in demand in ancient Greece, Athens in particular (*Sol.* 12). Scouring Greek literature for appearances of this figure reveals that none of his works are extant and that there was a general confusion about his identity—*Was he a poet, a politician, a soothsayer, or a scholar?* The few ancient sources that mention an Epimenides do not agree on when he lived or what he did.¹⁴⁸ The seemingly assured attribution of this quotation to Epimenides

¹⁴³ *Pastoral Epistles*, 399.

¹⁴⁴ “Logical Role.”

¹⁴⁵ *Critical and Exegetical*, 200–201.

¹⁴⁶ Lorenz Oberlinner, *Kommentar Zum Titusbrieff*, vol. 3, HThKNT (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1996), 38–39.

¹⁴⁷ As argued by Harrill in ““Without Lies or Deception,”” 453–58.

¹⁴⁸ See also Alan H. Griffiths, “Epimenides,” ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), <http://www.oxfordreference.com>.

has given scholars more confidence to make assertions about its meaning than is merited by our limited historical knowledge or by its use in the context of Titus.

Plato did not refer to the ancient Cretan soothsayer named Epimenides as *prophet* (*Leg.* 1.642; cf. Titus 1:12). Diogenes Laertius (3rd cent. CE) claimed that Epimenides could predict the future (*Lives* 1.114); but that claim would not necessarily qualify him as a *prophet* in prominent Judeo-Christian conceptions of the role, neither does it lend the kind of authority to the quotation that the *prima facie* reading expects.¹⁴⁹ Lucian (3rd cent. CE) called Epimenides a *soothsayer* (χρησμολόγος, *Tim.* 6) and associated him with the initial portion of the Cretan quotation, but he was probably just following Clement in this attribution.¹⁵⁰ Cicero listed Epimenides of Crete alongside other ancient soothsayers who artlessly attempted to predict the future in a *prophetic frenzy* (*vaticinantibus per furorem*, *Div.* 1.34), but his sketch of Epimenides diverges still from others I mentioned. Cicero attributed “prophetic” characteristics to Epimenides, but he did not describe him as a poet or a prophet by any standard that early Christians would recognize. One would not associate Cicero’s and Paul’s figures with each other except because of the coincidental English cognate *prophet* used in the English translation of Cicero’s words—Cicero’s behavioral and Paul’s literary descriptions of these people do not coincide. No single ancient figure fits the description of Epimenides the Cretan poet. George Leonard Huxley claims that Plato erred in his description (*Leg.* 1.642, D–E), but he also acknowledges a general confusion about who Epimenides was, which would seem to have been less of a problem had there been a repository of his works at-hand.¹⁵¹ Although modern writers invoke his name with confidence, ancient authors were far less clear. Existing evidence

ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606413.001.0001/acref-9780198606413-e-2454?rskey=0SYwvF&result=2442&print (accessed 4/3/19).

¹⁴⁹ Diogenes Laertius, “*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*,” in *Diogenis Laertii Vitae Philosophorum*, ed. Herbert S. Long, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), *Lives* 1.114. In the cited text, he writes regarding Epimenides, λέγουσι δέ τινες ὅτι Κρήτες αὐτῷ θύουσιν ὡς θεῷ· φασὶ γὰρ καὶ [προ]γνωστικώτατον γεγονέναι. Robert D. Hicks translates: “Some writers say that the Cretans sacrifice to him as a god; for they say that he had superhuman foresight.” See “*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*,” trans. Robert D. Hicks. LCL 184 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925; repr., 1972), *Lives* 1.114.

¹⁵⁰ Lucian wrote, ὁ Ἐπιμενίδης Κρής ἦν χρησμολόγος, οὗ καὶ τὸ “Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται” λόγιον (*Epimenides of Crete was an oracle utterer, of whom also [came] the saying “Cretans [are] always liars”*). See Lucian, “*Scholia*,” in *Scholia in Lucianum*, ed. Hugo Rabe (Leipzig: Teubner, 1906), 110.

¹⁵¹ Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry*, 83.

does not strongly support assertions that Paul borrowed authority from a known Cretan to vouch for the veracity of the insult he wished to level against Cretans.

Over-confidence that this quotation came from a Cretan poet has resulted in misleading translations and interpretations that would not have been likely without a commitment to this attribution. The NEB translates εἶπεν τις ἐξ αὐτῶν ἴδιος αὐτῶν προφήτης (Titus 1:12a) very loosely as “It was a Cretan prophet, one of their own countrymen, who said.” Several interpretive choices in this translation are indebted to assumptions of the *prima facie* interpretation and have introduced misleading semantic ideas into the English text of this verse—e.g., ethnicity (*Cretan*) and nationality (*countrymen*). These ideas are not native to the context, which seems to point at troublemakers as an improvised group not defined strictly by ethnicity or nationality but more so by religion and theology.¹⁵² Assuming the attribution to Epimenides as well as the appropriateness of the label *prophet*, the more recent ESV renders the portion, “One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said.” The NRSV translates ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη (*this testimony*, Titus 1:13a) as *that testimony*, an interpretive choice that takes the proximal discourse deictic as a distal temporal deictic.¹⁵³ These translational choices can be traced to the assumption that the quotation originated with a certain Cretan Epimenides, a point Paul may not have been interested in making. Taking the quotation out of its grammatical context, which does not suggest that a Cretan said it, Felix Jacoby inserts a clarification into his collection of ancient references to Epimenides: “εἶπέν τις ἐξ αὐτῶν (scil. τῶν Κρητῶν), ἴδιος αὐτῶν προφήτης.”¹⁵⁴ If Jacoby had not assumed the traditional, but uncertain, attribution, he would have no reason to include the biblical verse in his list, let alone his supposed clarification.

Commentators frequently claim that Epimenides originated the entire hexameter quotation, but none of Epimenides’s writing survives. Many modern scholars accept this attribution without question. Barrett, for instance, writes that it was “almost certainly Epimenides of Crete (6th–5th century B.C.).”¹⁵⁵ The attribution is not necessarily incorrect, but attention to this quotation’s origin obscures an appreciation of Paul’s use of

¹⁵² See Chapter One under *Referentials* and Chapter Two under *Literary Context*. See also Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 131.

¹⁵³ See Chapter One under *Deixis*.

¹⁵⁴ Felix Jacoby, ed., “Epimenides von Kreta (457), Fragmenta,” in *Die Fragmente Der Griechischen Historiker*, vol. 3B, FGrH 457 (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 390–94. Retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/Iris/Cite?1347:002:0> (accessed 5/5/18).

¹⁵⁵ Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 131.

the quotation in its context. Titus is the full quotation's earliest extant witness, and Paul never precisely identifies its originator. We may too readily assume that his audience recognized the quotation and its author. Nothing clearly suggests that ancient origins were either important or even known to Paul. He refers elliptically to the *speaker* of this quotation, without a clear indication that its original historical and literary contexts had any bearing on his choice to present it to Titus.¹⁵⁶ Not only is the attribution to Epimenides far from certain, scholars from the modern and premodern eras have advanced others as the original source of the quotation in Titus 1:12.

b. Who Else Could Have Written It?

The earliest commentators on Titus were not certain about the origins of the quotation. Outside of Titus, the only extant portion appears in the works of Callimachus (*Hymn*. 1.8–9).¹⁵⁷ He may have borrowed the phrase from an earlier poem by Epimenides and incorporated it into his own work as an ironic jab against the misconstrued atheism of the Cretans. Along with some Patristic writers, Calvin knew that Callimachus's proposition about Cretan lying was based on a misconstrual of Cretan claims to possessing the tomb of the Zeus. He, nevertheless, asserted that Paul had “the best of reasons” for considering the Cretans to be “very wicked men.”¹⁵⁸ Callimachus's first *Ode to Zeus* ridiculed the seeming audacity of the Cretans in claiming to host the tomb of Zeus—a lie, of course, because *you [Zeus] did not die, because you are for ever* (σὺ δ' οὐ θάνεις, ἐσσι γὰρ αἰεὶ, *Hymn*. 1.9). Actually, the grave for *Zeus* on Crete did not reference the Greek God, but a Cretan hero. So, Callimachus was not addressing lying in general but piously castigating the Cretans for claiming to have buried Zeus. He was mistaken about *which* and *what kind of* Zeus the Cretans claimed to have buried.

Quinn recognizes that the quotation cannot be attributed with confidence and cites early Christian attempts to identify the *someone* (τις, Titus 1:12) who was saying these things. He writes that, as early as Theodore, people suspected that, “the citation was a

¹⁵⁶ Tatian (c. 120–c. 180 CE) is disinterested in attribution when he ridicules credulous pagans by accentuating the contradiction between the celebrated tomb of Olympic Zeus in Crete with the pagan line that Cretans are liars (*Or. Graec.* 27.1): τάφος τοῦ Ὀλυμπίου Διὸς καθ' ὑμᾶς δείκνυται κἂν ψεύδεσθαί τις τοὺς Κρηῖτας λέγῃ (*the burial of the Olympic God is shown to you, even though someone might say Cretans to be lying*). Harrill suggests that Tatian deliberately obscures Paul's mention of this claim, because he wants to distance Christianity from Greek philosophy. See “Without Lies or Deception,” 454.

¹⁵⁷ Callimachus, *Hymns and Epigrams*, 36–37.

¹⁵⁸ *Commentaries*, 249–50.

popular proverb rather than a quotation of an ancient poem as such.”¹⁵⁹ This suggests that the quotation’s ancient purveyors may have been either ignorant or ambivalent about its supposed Cretan origins and casts doubt on interpretations that depend upon an attribution to Epimenides. In addition to Theodore of Mopsuestia, Origen of Alexandria (184–253 CE) attributes the quotation to Callimachus, showing full knowledge of the statement and its context from Callimachus but not from Epimenides (*Cels.* 3.43.1–35). Origen also seems to know only the portion of the quotation found in the Callimachus hymn as being of ancient origin. Among other early writers, Athenagoras (c. 133–c. 190 CE) knew the quotation from Callimachus and probably Titus but does not mention Epimenides (*Leg.* 30.3–5). Athenagoras was not, however, making explicit claims about the relationship between the Epistle to Titus and the Callimachus hymn.¹⁶⁰

Huxley devotes a chapter to Epimenides in his 1969 *Greek Epic Poetry*, and Mounce refers to Huxley’s argument as “either unknown or not followed.”¹⁶¹ Huxley points to three main factors that, for him, make Epimenides unlikely to be the author of the quotation: First, he judges the brief sentence to be written in the Doric Greek dialect—what Huxley refers to as “Hesiodic language.”¹⁶² Second, the only fragment purported to be original to Epimenides appears to regard the voyage of Argo.¹⁶³ Huxley conjectures that Epimenides may have invented a Cretan stop on that voyage to add prestige to his island which may have led a Delphic, non-Cretan poet to retaliate by insulting the Cretans.¹⁶⁴ Third, Huxley considers the attribution to Epimenides the “Apostle’s mistake;” because, as he observes, saying that “Cretans are always liars” would be a logical contradiction if spoken by a Cretan. Huxley ignores two important possibilities: first, that Paul was not, in fact, attributing the quotation to a Cretan; and second, that Paul could have deliberately

¹⁵⁹ Quinn, *Letter to Titus*, 107.

¹⁶⁰ Tatian (c. 120–c. 180 CE) possibly knew the shorter version from Callimachus and likely knew Titus, too, but his citation is corrupted (*Or. Graec.* 27.1). See *Die Ältesten Apologeten*, ed. Edgar J. Goodspeed (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915), 268–305.

¹⁶¹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 398.

¹⁶² Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry*, 81.

¹⁶³ Epimenides, “Die ‘Kleinen’ Griechischen Historiker Heute,” in *Lustrum*, trans. Hans Joachim Mette, vol. 21 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 29. Retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.czproxy.asburyseminary.edu/Iris/Cite?1347:005:0> (accessed 5/5/18).

¹⁶⁴ Huxley argues, but with scant evidence, that Epimenides’s interest in the voyage of Argo may have been the source of the alternative tradition that the Argonauts made an additional, divinely ordained, stop in Crete on their maiden voyage, contrary to the original epic but present in Herodotus’s (484–425 BCE) version. See *Greek Epic Poetry*, 81; where Huxley writes, “This voyage past Crete [which involved an encounter with Triton] may therefore well be an innovation of Epimenides himself.”

exploited it as a logical contradiction, as Thiselton argues.¹⁶⁵ Weaknesses in Huxley's argument aside, he raises doubts about the quotation's conventional attribution.

Christof Zimmer recognizes that the attribution to Epimenides is conjectural, based, even from the earliest sources, *only on indirect references*.¹⁶⁶ Zimmer makes an often-neglected argument that the quotation should actually be attributed to Eubulides of Miletus and not a Cretan at all. A great portion of Zimmer's argument has to do with the historical development of the liar paradox in Greek philosophy, and it deserves consideration. He builds up to the following assertion: *It is therefore obvious that a connection between the liar paradox and Epimenides could at best have an illustrative character, but by no means any historical one*.¹⁶⁷ It must be understood that Zimmer is not referring to the assignment of the paradox to Epimenides in general but to the quite specific attribution of this supposed instance of it in Titus to Epimenides. The plausibility of this quotation not originating with a Cretan undermines interpretations based on the presence of a *liar paradox*. Zimmer cross-examines proposals for the origin of the quotation and suggests that Clement's attribution to Epimenides—followed unquestioningly by numerous scholars thereafter—was a matter of convenience and conjecture. Epimenides was simply the most famous Cretan that came to Clement's mind.¹⁶⁸ With the attribution to Epimenides so assured in the minds of many, few have interacted with Zimmer's claims. I see only one integral weakness in Zimmer's argument: He makes a very simple, but critical, oversight—he assumes that the pronouns Paul uses to frame the quotation expect an ethnic Cretan as their referent, which is why Zimmer and many others categorize the quotation as a *liar paradox*. In Chapter One, under *Basic Pragmatic Processes*, I will argue that even this assumption is due to the prevalence of the *prima facie* reading.

From dubious attributions to embarrassing attempts at historical proof, the history of interpreting this passage exhibits attempts to excuse and attempts to validate Paul's bigotry. These are especially misdirected if he was not even asserting the substance of the quotation in the first place. The linguistically-encoded content of the quotation, nevertheless, represents a slur on the Cretan people. Careful scholars from the earliest

¹⁶⁵ See "Liar Paradox."

¹⁶⁶ In Zimmer's words: "lediglich auf indirekte Verweisungen." See "Die Lügner-Antinomie in Titus 1,12," *LB* 59 (1987): 77–99, at 79.

¹⁶⁷ In Zimmer's words: "Es ist deshalb offenbar, dass ein Zusammenhang zwischen der Lügner-Antinomie und Epimenides höchstens illustrativen Charakter haben könnte, keineswegs aber einen irgendwie gearteten historischen." See *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

period to the present day do not accept some of the assumptions commensurate with a *prima facie* reading, but I think that an interpretation that adequately accounts for the evidence has yet to be proposed. Given that the Apostle Paul is the purported author of this letter, this interpretive history causes us to ask, *Why does Paul appear to be such a bigot here? Does this passage merely serve to disparage Cretans and give readers a negative impression of their innate characteristics and candidacy for redemption, or are we misreading it?*

Scholars have expended significant energy answering the question: *Who is responsible for the statement, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons”?* In the process of arguing this thesis, I will propose a plausible resolution and show that the question is a red herring that distracts from more important interpretive issues in the passage. Paul was repeating the words of another, but exactly whose is unclear, and too rarely do commentators consider whether Paul agreed or disagreed with those words. A specific but dubious attribution customarily accompanies and lends an air of validity to *prima facie* interpretations. I contend, however, that one can arrive at a valid interpretation simply by grasping the information that Paul supplied about the quotation’s origins within the letter itself. Such contextual information is a more secure basis for confident interpretation.¹⁶⁹ Clement of Alexandria’s possibly mistaken but well-intentioned attribution does not get Paul off-the-hook for bigotry and may have even hampered unbiased interpretation.¹⁷⁰

RT now helps us to explain what makes the *prima facie* interpretation so difficult to resist. As with other passages, the accidents of interpretive history have influenced prevailing interpretations of Titus 1:12 more than the text itself. In other words, Paul appears to be such a bigot in Titus as a result of our interpretations and not as a result of the epistle’s language. I have described several unresolved problems within the history of interpretation of Titus 1:12. Now, I will describe the promise of a Relevance-based interpretive strategy to ameliorate an interpretive impasse in this passage.

¹⁶⁹ I discuss literary context for interpreting ostensive inferential [written] communication in Chapter Two, under *Cognitive Environment*.

¹⁷⁰ Marshall explains that some scholars have resisted the temptation to follow Clement in attributing this quotation directly to a Cretan. On account of the grammar and context, they insist that Paul is referring to *ne'er-do-well(s)* in the Christian community (with the spare ethno-religious attribute, *μάλιστα οἱ ἐκ τῆς περικομῆς*, Titus 1:10), who are causing trouble for the Cretans. Marshall identifies the main problem with this hypothesis as the question of why such an attack on the Cretans would come from a Christian (i.e., Paul), but my proposal rejects the assumption that Paul’s use of the quotation is descriptive at all. It serves, rather, an argumentative function. See *Critical and Exegetical*, 198–99.

II. Relevance Theory—A Basis for a Historically and Linguistically Responsible Interpretive Strategy

Relevance theorists base their claims in the observable success of human language, so RT offers a promising foundation for a reading strategy less prone to the dubious assumptions and problematic conclusions described earlier. Instead of favoring specific indicators of meaning such as grammar, lexicon, general historical knowledge, or social inquiry, it sees language as functioning at the intersection of these and other factors in countless particular contexts. It reckons all matters of context within its explanation of how meaning is conveyed through language. So, Anne Furlong argues that RT supplies an ideal framework for literary interpretation studies. In her words, “Relevance theory provides just the kind of coherent, unified approach that the field needs.”¹⁷¹ What is *relevant* to a context constitutes the key to explaining how hearers arrive at a given interpretation; because, as theorists hold, hearers follow one governing principle—*relevance*—in the process of interpretation. I introduce the theory below and will expand on its details throughout this thesis.

Although RT provides an explanation of how hearers find meaning in language, it is not a method of interpretation *per se*. Its tasks are to analyze and describe how humans, in fact, interpret natural language communication. Theorists do not decode language as much as reverse engineer it. RT does not prescribe the creation or interpretation of utterances; but its insights, properly understood, can illuminate the process of interpretation and sensitize interpreters to critical linguistic evidence, on the one hand, and expose faulty assumptions, on the other. In this sense, RT can be the basis for a historically and linguistically responsible interpretive strategy appropriate to the biblical text as written communication.

Several scholars have argued for and demonstrated the application of RT to literature. For instance, Seiji Uchida explains that features appearing to be unique to literary texts (e.g., suspense and twist) actually accomplish communicative functions that parallel spoken language. He asserts that the basic explanatory claims of RT (*à la* Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson’s classic 1986 treatment) apply to written as well as spoken language.¹⁷² According to Uchida, the human mind uses the same basic strategies and processes to interpret both live speech and literary texts. The cognitive principle and the

¹⁷¹ See Furlong, “Relevance Theory,” 7.

¹⁷² Seiji Uchida, “Text and Relevance,” *RTAI* (1998): 161–78. For the version of RT that Uchida interacts with and makes claims about, see Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

communicative principle (defined below) apply to both, although the process with written texts can be slowed down and drawn out, as eyes can return where ears cannot. Because the biblical text is written language that ostensibly conveys some meaning, RT is a fitting discipline to apply. Regina Blass argues that the linguistic features of written and spoken discourse do not fundamentally differ so the interpretive insights of RT are applicable to texts.¹⁷³ Furlong provides several reasons why RT is suited to literary interpretation, and here she asserts no decisive difference between the comprehension of written and spoken language:

An account of literary interpretation is best placed within a general theory of communication and cognition [i.e., relevance theory]... literary interpretation is a special case of the interpretive strategies used in spontaneous comprehension, rather than a deviation from them.¹⁷⁴

While practicing biblical hermeneutics, few commentators articulate a philosophy of language; yet clarity, transparency, and consistency regarding language is appropriate for the Bible as written communication. In any paragraph, a commentator may assume that a lexeme is paramount; in another, it is the syntax. Elsewhere, the same interpreter will emphasize the nuance of fluid and non-literal use and then decode meaning on the grounds of monumental history, inscriptions, a cultural artifact or practice. Another interpreter may cycle through a completely different set of considerations without a transparent or consistent guideline for weighing evidence and evaluating between possible interpretations. Few discuss ahead-of-time how they see language functioning in general. Working from a single principle (relevance) that is appropriate to the kind of material under examination, I expose flaws with some interpretations and draw attention to neglected evidence for understanding Titus 1:12. This study will illuminate some of the issues with this passage and should demonstrate the potential of a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic.

Escaping the gravitational pull of a *prima facie* reading requires a strategy that can disentangle texts *qua* utterances from the assumptions imposed upon them by their history of interpretation—a strategy illuminated by but not tethered to historic, traditional, or conventional readings. So, as David R. Bauer and Robert A Traina argue concerning biblical hermeneutics in general, the strategy must be inductive, evidence-based, and

¹⁷³ *Relevance Relations in Discourse: A Study with Special Reference to Sissala*, CSL 55 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10. For her full argument, see pages 7–42.

¹⁷⁴ “Relevance Theory,” 26–27. See, also, her “A Modest Proposal: Linguistics and Literary Studies,” *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10 (2007): 323–45.

radically open to the results of inquiry.¹⁷⁵ While being radically open, the strategy cannot be amorphous or incoherent; it must aid interpreters in the careful process of reconstructing meaning faithful to the original context. The strategy needs to appreciate the kind of object Titus is—a written specimen of *ostensive inferential communication* from which readers seek to discern an authorial aim.¹⁷⁶ Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. writes, “A widely-held assumption in contemporary cognitive science is that listeners’/ readers’ recognitions of speakers’/authors’ intentions is a crucial aspect of utterance interpretation.”¹⁷⁷ Although arguments for and against *Pauline* authorship may be inconclusive, readers can assert that Titus has sufficient coherence in its canonical form to posit a purpose. The primary route into the meaning of the composition begins with the document’s self-presentation and reception as a letter.

Owing to trends in philosophical psychology, art criticism, and literary interpretation in the mid- to late-twentieth-century, it had become *passé* a couple of generations ago to assert a retrievable authorial intention. Gibbs examines the cognitive linguistic and hermeneutical aspects of the question of intention and criticizes the abandonment of speaker/author intention as a dubious consequence of theoretical approaches and a contradiction of overwhelming empirical evidence. The most current work in pragmatics, and specifically RT, assumes that communication involves ostensive intention and that it is not only a *worthwhile* objective to discern this intended meaning but an *achievable* one, too. Whereas, Gibbs notes, “Continental philosophers and literary theorists have proclaimed that authorial intentions do not constrain the interpretation of literary and philosophical texts,” the current turn in cognitive linguistics has reaffirmed the importance of intention on the part of speakers and writers.¹⁷⁸ Due to current linguistic theory, it is becoming, once again, absurd to suggest that the intentions of a speaker or writer are either irretrievable (on account of diverse subjective factors in the hearer or reader) or irrelevant to the enterprise of discerning meaning. Noël Carroll outlines the

¹⁷⁵ *Inductive Bible Study*, 23–25.

¹⁷⁶ I explain the meaning of *ostensive inferential communication* below. For more detail, see Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 112–19.

¹⁷⁷ Gibbs also explains, “My use of utterance refers both to oral and written linguistic acts.” See “The Intentionalist Controversy and Cognitive Science,” *Philosophical Psychology* 6 (1993): 181–205, at 182.

¹⁷⁸ Gibbs provides the following example in the same context: “Many legal theorists argue that the interpretation of the Constitution does not depend on understanding something about the intentions of its original framers in 1787.” See *ibid.*, 184. He, incidentally, treats both oral speech and writing as ostensive communication.

history of mistrust in the enterprise of discerning authorial intention (a.k.a. the *intentional fallacy*) in the modern era and argues that it was misguided and self-contradictory.¹⁷⁹

The starting premise of RT is the observation that *ostensive inferential communication* has tended to be successful for humanity. Seiji Uchida and Robyn Carston explain that the phrase encompasses speaker intention, hearer processing, and cooperative effort.¹⁸⁰ Because communication is *inferential*, the hearer has a significant but delimited role. Theorists, then, investigate how humans successfully comprehend utterances given the indeterminacy of linguistically-encoded semantic representations (i.e., sentences). RT begins descriptively by examining successful instances of utterance interpretation and moves inductively toward more encompassing claims about how language functions. Because communication is *ostensive*, a retrievable speaker intention is assumed. Gibbs explains:

Authorial intentions provide the main criterion for textual interpretation that enables literary analysis to be objective ... Without authorial intentions there is simply too much indeterminacy and instability in the public linguistic conventions governing meaning, hence there is no stable object for literary study and criticism.¹⁸¹

Over the past generation, theorists have developed and refined the discipline of RT so that it is increasingly informed by empirical evidence and rigorous critical dialogue.¹⁸² At this stage, the theory is mature enough to illuminate the development of a biblical reading strategy. In this thesis, Titus 1:12 is a test case for such a strategy built upon and sensitive to the insights of RT. By developing and demonstrating this strategy, I not only offer an alternative perspective on the Cretan quotation but I also introduce an interpretive strategy that may be amenable to scholars who recognize the need for more attention to linguistic theory—not simply to discrete issues of language such as lexicon and grammar—in biblical hermeneutics.

I find RT suitable for the following four reasons: The first is *appropriateness*—Scripture is written communication and expression, subsisting in (or inhabiting) language; no discipline is more fitting for the nature of the subject. The second is *timing*—RT, over

¹⁷⁹ Noël Carroll, “Interpretation and Intention: The Debate between Hypothetical and Actual Intentionalism,” *Metaphilosophy* 31 (2000): 75–95. His research concerns literature, making it pertinent to our inquiry.

¹⁸⁰ *Relevance Theory*, 298.

¹⁸¹ Gibbs, Jr., “Intentionalist Controversy,” 193.

¹⁸² Theorists have developed RT from a philosophical to a cognitive discipline with increasing consonance with neurology, psychology, sociology, and other sciences. Although these later developments are interesting, they are not as pertinent to our inquiry as the theory’s central principles.

the past generation, has matured as a discipline and become prominent within linguistics, although its exposure in biblical scholarship is very limited. The third is *material*—Titus and its particular issues have never received a thoroughgoing treatment from a RT viewpoint. The fourth is *promise*—After considering methods of socio-historical criticism, cultural hermeneutics, empire criticism, and others, RT seemed to offer the most potential for delivering what is needed in the case of Titus 1:12—a fresh look. RT appears worthy of effort and confidence, particularly because it incorporates the most eclectic sources of evidence and evaluates them by a single, economic scale—*relevance*. I will now describe RT with reference to key theorists and explain my rationale for developing a reading strategy from it.

Rationale and Description

Because Titus takes the form of a letter, it calls for an interpretive approach that appreciates its communicative intent. I base this study, therefore, in the linguistic discipline of RT, which shares the narrow scope of *linguistic* pragmatics that is regularly dubbed the *British-American* (sometimes, *Anglo-American*) model. I must note the definitional distinction between two broad schools of pragmatics to more narrowly indicate the branch that informs my research. Stephen C. Levinson explains the *Continental* versus the *British-American* approaches, which each school calls *pragmatics*. The main difference is scope. The *Continental* school is broadly applied across psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, anthropological, and other disciplines without sharp boundaries, while the *British-American* school is linguistics-focused.¹⁸³ For the sake of narrow focus and material appropriateness, this thesis is guided by the British-American model of linguistic pragmatics of which RT is a species.¹⁸⁴

1. Genealogical Development of RT from Pragmatics

According to Yan Huang, pragmatics is “the study of language in use.”¹⁸⁵ Levinson regards the pioneer of pragmatics to be Charles Morris, who first coined the term

¹⁸³ *Pragmatics*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), ix, 1–34. Levinson explains that he writes his textbook on Pragmatics with a focus on the “Anglo-American” approach because the “Continental” approach is broad and encompassing of disciplines outside linguistics proper, and because the “Anglo-American” approach focuses more on linguistics and philosophical approaches toward “ordinary language.”

¹⁸⁴ Billy Clark and Yan Huang also discuss the distinctions and concerns of each model with more detail. See Yan Huang, “Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics: Remapping Their Terrains,” *Int.Rev.Prag.* 5 (2013): 129–62; and Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 1–42.

¹⁸⁵ Huang, “Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics,” 130.

pragmatics in reference to one aspect of semiotics. According to Levinson, one of Morris's major contributions to semiotics was his introduction of a "trichotomy" that included *semantics*, which dealt with the relationship between signs and the things they represented; *syntax*, which dealt with the relationships between signs; and *pragmatics*, which dealt with the relationship between signs and their interpreters. Morris's conceptions were broad and non-technical and did not constitute a theory of language.¹⁸⁶

H. Paul Grice applied pragmatics specifically to natural language use. His inquiries were sparked by the assumptions inherent in this synthetic question: *How are humans able to understand one another consistently and successfully, even when the linguistically-encoded meanings of their utterances to each other are incomplete?*¹⁸⁷

Pragmatics recognizes the inferential nature of human communication and, in semiotic terms, focuses on the relation between signs and their interpreters.¹⁸⁸ For Sperber and Wilson, the chief maxim of pragmatics is that utterances must be relevant to the context in which they are spoken.¹⁸⁹ While RT was still in its infancy during the 1980s, Levinson and other linguistic pragmaticists often appealed to the principle of relevance in working out *implicatures*.¹⁹⁰ RT defines these with technical precision: an *implicature* is "an ostensively communicated assumption that is derived solely via processes of pragmatic inference."¹⁹¹ It is an implication of an utterance that the speaker intends to convey. Implicatures can be either weakly or strongly implied. Levinson also observed that relevance seemed to be the only maxim in Gricean pragmatics that could not be flouted for effect and that relevance has a binding effect upon the other maxims.¹⁹² It is not relevant to say something that is patently uninformative, something that is not of concern in the broader discursive enterprise, something that disregards the course of the discussion, something of no usefulness or interest to the audience, and so forth. I show how conventional interpretations of Titus 1:12 may contradict this fundamental principle.

¹⁸⁶ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 2.

¹⁸⁷ H. Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Speech Acts*, ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, vol. 3, *Syntax and Semantics* (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 41–58. My synthetic question tries to draw out the thrust behind assumptions, inquiries, and conclusions that he does not succinctly state in a single place.

¹⁸⁸ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 2–3.

¹⁸⁹ Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Pragmatics: An Overview. CLCS Occasional Paper No. 16* (Dublin: Dublin University, Trinity College (Ireland), Centre for Language and Communication Studies, 1986), 16, *et passim*.

¹⁹⁰ E.g., "Incidentally, exactly how the appropriate implicatures ... are to be predicted remains quite unclear, although the maxim of Relevance would presumably play a crucial role." See Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 111.

¹⁹¹ Carston and Uchida, *Relevance Theory*, 297; see also Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 78–79.

¹⁹² Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 111–12.

Within the broader discipline of pragmatics, RT provides a unified theory of utterance interpretation governed by a single, economic assumption: *An assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects in the context are large and to the extent that the effort required to process it in the context is small.*¹⁹³ This governing rule of RT is a succinct articulation of the economy of cognitive effects. Sperber and Wilson, the theory's principal architects, argue that this is what makes it a theory, in contrast to Gricean pragmatics, which offers some broad, mostly philosophical insights about how language works but lacks a simple, cohesive explicative framework.¹⁹⁴

2. *How RT Works*

To support this economic theory of language, RT makes two standard assumptions—one about human cognition and one about human communication:

1) *The Cognitive Principle of Relevance—Human cognition is geared towards the maximization of relevance (that is, the achievement of as many contextual effects as possible for as little effort as possible).*

2) *The Communicative Principle of Relevance—Every ostensive stimulus communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.*¹⁹⁵

Blass, a student of Wilson, offers a helpful expansion of the *communicative principle*: “By demanding attention from the audience she [the speaker] suggests that the information she is offering is relevant enough to be worth the audience’s attention.”¹⁹⁶

Explicature is a critical concept for understanding the process of utterance interpretation according to RT. Sperber and Wilson’s own definition may be helpful:

What we are calling the explicature is close to what might be commonsensically described as the explicit content, or what is said, or the literal meaning of the utterance. The less explicit the meaning, the more responsibility the hearer must take for the interpretation he constructs.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Carston and Uchida, *Relevance Theory*, 299, paraphrased.

¹⁹⁴ Clark explains various aspects of the development of Grice’s intuitions and philosophical linguistic speculations into a proper theory, acknowledging, as others have, that Sperber and Wilson were pivotal to clarifying and consolidating the discipline theoretically. See Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 43, 67–68, 84. For their own articulation of these issues, see, e.g., Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber, *Meaning and Relevance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–27. Pragmatics and RT bear an integral kinship, so I refer to concepts from either interchangeably when they are true of both.

¹⁹⁵ These are standard definitions. See, e.g., Carston and Uchida, *Relevance Theory*, 298. For further explanation, see Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 29–34.

¹⁹⁶ *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 43.

¹⁹⁷ “Pragmatics,” in *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*, Oxford Handbooks Online. (London: Oxford University Press, 2007), 468–504, at 481.

Gene L. Green offers this more technical definition: “The explicatures of an utterance consist of the information encoded in the sign system and all the information inferentially connected to it through reference assignment, disambiguation, and enrichment.”¹⁹⁸

According to Sperber and Wilson, hearers take the following actions in discerning utterance meaning: construct an appropriate hypothesis about explicatures by developing the linguistically-encoded logical form; construct an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions (implicated premises); and construct an appropriate hypothesis about intended contextual implications (implicated conclusions).¹⁹⁹ By *implicated premises* they do not mean what is implied by the utterance in an informational sense but rather what is required to make sense of the utterance from the standpoint of cognitive effects. Billy Clark condenses the aforementioned: “working out explicatures, working out implicated premises, and working out implicated conclusions.”²⁰⁰ They are careful to note that these steps are logically sequential but that they actually occur rapidly and virtually simultaneously in the human mind. These three actions correspond to the three insights that organize this thesis—the inferential nature of communication, the hearer’s role in communication, and the non-propositional dimensions of communication, respectively.

Importantly, theorists do not claim a specific ordering of these actions, and they outline several specific tasks that may be required in the process of utterance interpretation. These include disambiguation of terms, reference assignment, decoding deictic terms, determining explicatures, deciphering implicatures, interpreting vague expressions, and working out ellipsed material. All of these more narrow tasks are logically discrete but virtually simultaneous and *pro re nata* (born for the present circumstance). Not all tasks are required in each instance of utterance interpretation. Clark speaks of these tasks as questions that might need to be answered, allowing that different utterances require different sets of questions or tasks.²⁰¹

Theorists do not claim that the processes are sequential or that a given set of tasks is comprehensive or exclusive. Instead, they emphasize two critical facts about actual utterance interpretation: first, it is a dialectic process, such that necessary tasks are

¹⁹⁸ “Relevance Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 2013), 266–73 at 269.

¹⁹⁹ See Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (2007), 479–84.

²⁰⁰ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 144.

²⁰¹ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 22.

completed in dependence upon the results of each; and, second, the necessary processes are generally rapid and intuitive. The tasks may be logically separable but are functionally co-dependent. Nevertheless, theorists base their outlines of processes upon a narrow set of shared principles that generally vary only somewhat in detail and terminology.

Some features of RT apply globally to all instances of interpretation, because RT is based on patterns of human cognition. First, the hearer's assumption of relevance instigates a desire for worthwhile cognitive effects in the processing of an utterance. That is, a hearer seeks to derive cognitive effects that will satisfactorily reward the processing effort expended.²⁰² Second, interpretation involves a non-sequential, dialectic process that, from the standpoint of natural languages, is rapid, intuitive, and virtually simultaneous.²⁰³ Therefore, cross-reference between the insights that I outline below is critical. Third, RT elevates the importance of speakers, hearers, and the effects of the utterances upon them over the semantics of words and structures in the process of interpretation. For these reasons, the introductory definitions I provide below will be essential as well as free cross-reference, just as in human cognition, to Relevance-theoretical principles.

3. *From a Theory to a Method*

To be clear, RT is not a method of interpretation. It is a theory about how hearers successfully interpret utterances (or fail) when the linguistically-encoded form is profoundly underdetermined. The success of natural language through human history is the theory's empirical bedrock. *That* natural language has tended to work for humans is taken for granted; RT is interested in explaining *how*. Theorists have developed a "relevance-guided comprehension heuristic" with a well-defined set of tasks, but fluent language users accomplish them rapidly and almost involuntarily.²⁰⁴ Natural language comprehension, as empirically observed, is not typically self-conscious and deliberate, so RT explains the complex and intuitive processes of interpretation by delineating logically distinguishable tasks, testing hypotheses, and extrapolating more general claims. Most theorists are

²⁰² Huang, "Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics," 140–44. He writes, "Grounded in a general view of human cognition, the central tenet of relevance theory is that the human cognitive system works in such a way as to tend to maximize relevance with respect to cognition and communication. Thus, the communicative principle of relevance is responsible for the recovery of both the explicit and implicit content of an utterance."

²⁰³ Gibbs notes, "Introspection is an unreliable indicator of unconscious mental activity;" so we need insight into "the underlying cognitive mechanisms used in normal language understanding." See "Intentionalist Controversy," 196. Theorists have made tremendous progress both empirically and analytically in this regard. Gibbs further states, "Cognitive scientists are suspicious of conscious introspections as a source of data in theorizing about cognitive processes" (198).

²⁰⁴ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 34–40, 119, *et passim*; Sperber and Wilson, "Pragmatics" (2007), 474.

primarily interested in answering the empirically-based question *How are language users so adept at understanding one another?* RT delineates the mental processes humans follow to arrive at meaning even though humans understand language *without* formally learning these processes.²⁰⁵ Because of the delineation and extrapolation, the insights of RT are particularly helpful for interpreting utterances for which the intuitive, organic, rapid, and complex processes that original audiences employed to discern meaning are no longer available, as is the case for Bible readers.

Even though RT is not an interpretive method, scholars can strategically apply its valid and well-tested insights to biblical interpretation. I define the approach that I describe and demonstrate in this dissertation as *a strategic application of key insights from RT to the linguistically and historically responsible interpretation of biblical texts*. Titus 1:12 is my test case. I label such an approach a *relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic*. I will now discuss the task of applying RT to scriptural texts.

4. *RT and the Bible*

Relevance theorists seek not only to understand how interlocutors comprehend one another but also to explain why they sometimes misinterpret utterances. Misunderstandings often involve a mismatch between the speaker's expectations of which assumptions the hearer should access and which assumptions the hearer actually does access. Difference in idiom as well as distance in time and space, and thus culture, can compound and exacerbate problematic mismatches between speaker assumptions and listener assumptions, as when modern readers interpret ancient documents.

Biblical scholars widely agree that the literary, linguistic, and socio-historical contexts in which the Bible was produced are pertinent to interpretation; but RT holds that interpreting utterances (sentences in their contexts) demands such a specific set of assumptions that our encyclopedic knowledge of literature, semantics, and socio-historical background can often be insufficient or misleading. Insufficient, because it lacks the extreme specificity of a given instance of communication; misleading, because it includes a host of facts that are prominent to us but that may not have been prominent to ancient readers. Therefore, our best indications of which assumptions influence particular instances of communication come from the text itself. The *principle of relevance* compels audiences to derive meaning attuned to the narrow scope of context rather than the broader literary

²⁰⁵ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 9.

environment, the semantics of lexemes and syntax, or historical backgrounds. Audiences draw upon real-world knowledge as the literary context requires it.

I have described several problems with interpretations of Titus 1:12; and I now identify the location of those errors, in semiotic terms, as between the text and its interpreters, not a misunderstanding of semantics or syntax. Some sensible corrections in syntactic and semantic understanding are needed, as well, but my concern is with pragmatics. Specifically, I will explain how *relevance* reveals where interpreters have erred and how it points to evidence for deriving historically and linguistically responsible, contextually appropriate interpretations. I will now introduce the three key RT insights that illuminate my examination of Titus 1:12.

Three Key Insights

After studying RT, its development, and adjacent disciplines, I have found three insights to be key—first, the inferential nature of all communication; second, the role of the hearer in communication; and, third, the non-propositional dimensions of communication. These three represent central assumptions that theorists consistently advance; they differentiate RT from other disciplines; and they complement one another interdependently. Each chapter of this thesis applies one of these insights to Titus 1:12 and evaluates previous interpretations thereof. The insights are global to RT, not logically sequential or hierarchical, so their applications overlap. As this thesis progresses, I explain both my interpretation of Titus 1:12 on the basis of these RT insights as well as what I consider to be interpretive errors made by neglecting or violating these insights.

As I pointed out earlier, scholars recognize these three insights under somewhat different rubrics. For instance, Furlong identifies the writer’s intention and the question of responsibility in interpretation as “those aspects most pertinent to literature.”²⁰⁶ She then explains that these aspects involve 1) “vagueness and indeterminacy,” which corresponds to what I call *the inferential nature*; 2) literary or “poetic” effects, which corresponds to what I call *the non-propositional dimensions*; and 3) distinguishing “between interpretations produced in the search for optimal relevance (exegetical) from those produced in the search for actual or maximal relevance (eisegetical),” which corresponds

²⁰⁶ Furlong, “Relevance Theory,” 2.

to what I call *the hearer's role*.²⁰⁷ The centrality of these insights will become even clearer as I now introduce them in conversation with prominent theorists.

1. The Inferential Nature of All Communication

The underdeterminacy of linguistically-encoded speech is the central assumption of pragmatics. Linguistic pragmaticists and Relevance theorists have been critiquing, refining, and developing the discipline for nearly fifty years, but Grice is still considered both pioneering and influential in the field. One of his major contributions was proposing a philosophy and grammar for calculating and describing the gap between the linguistically-encoded content of a statement and a speaker's intentions with the actual utterance and for explaining how hearers successfully and consistently bridge that gap in natural languages.²⁰⁸ He recognized that natural language has an inferential dimension and that speakers and hearers, as well as writers and readers, are involved in a cooperative process—hence, his *Cooperative Principle*. Grice presents this principle as follows: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.”²⁰⁹ He understood much natural language to require inference, but later Relevance theorists would extend this *pragmatic* claim to say that communication is inherently inferential. Grice's maxims of *Quality*, *Quantity*, *Relevance*, and *Manner* with their sub-maxims give more specific parameters for what was assumed in his governing cooperative principle.²¹⁰

Within a generation, a discipline within pragmatics arose, and Sperber and Wilson were its chief proponents and architects. They seminaly argued that all of Grice's maxims could be subsumed under a single principle of *Relevance*, properly and technically defined.²¹¹ Hence, RT became a central extension of pragmatics, bringing technical precision to the broader discipline. They came to call it *Relevance Theory*, because it built upon Grice's maxim of *Relevance*: “Make your contribution relevant.”²¹² Two developments were crucial: First, RT became a comprehensive theory of utterance interpretation built on a single principle of relevance, so that RT is more properly dubbed a

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Grice, “Logic and Conversation” This text is actually one of several copyrighted reprints of Grice's William James Lectures at Harvard, 1966-1967.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 45. See also Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 101.

²¹⁰ It is not necessary, for the sake of this thesis, to outline Grice's maxims in detail. I comment on some, as appropriate, but Relevance theorists have refined and superceded his classic presentation. They are outlined succinctly in Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 101–2.

²¹¹ Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (1981), 282–83.

²¹² Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 102.

species of pragmatics than a sub-field within pragmatics.²¹³ Second, RT gave technical precision to several aspects of Grice's proposals. Such precision was necessary to make it a viable theory, whereas pragmatics had been a thoughtful (even historically pivotal) but inexact conception of how humans succeed in communicating through natural language.²¹⁴

Grice had mainly been concerned with the recognized deictic, referential, and ambiguous features of speech and explaining how hearers discern the meaning of components such as pronouns, references to time, and non-literal speech. He objected to pure semanticism in which the meaning of an utterance is held in the linguistically-encoded forms to the neglect of the relationship between signs and their interpreters. He argued that people do not comprehend utterances simply by grasping the meanings of words (lexical semantics) and their relations to each other (syntax). Grice aimed at explicating how hearers filled utterances with meaning in order to consistently arrive at speakers' intended meanings.

For Sperber and Wilson, Grice had not gone far enough in recognizing the degree to which language was inferential. Grice said that inferential processes were necessary once the propositional content of *what is said* had been clarified by means of a more conventional process of disambiguation, reference assignment, and clarifying ambiguities.²¹⁵ In other words, inference was necessary for deriving *implicatures*. Relevance theorists insist that language is inherently inferential and that deriving a speaker's *explicatures* as well as *implicatures* requires inferential processes. A speaker's *explicatures* include critical information about how linguistically-encoded content is meant to be taken (e.g., as literal or figurative, as direct or indirect). Sperber and Wilson explain, "According to our account, the recovery of both explicit and implicit content may involve a substantial element of pragmatic inference."²¹⁶ Since Grice, pragmaticists have been using the term *implicatures* in a technical sense, but Sperber and Wilson introduced the idea of *explicatures* to add precision to Grice's less technical label *what is said*.²¹⁷ Furlong expresses the need for inference at every level of comprehension: "Even in establishing

²¹³ I use *species* to refer to RT's relationship to pragmatics based on a general recognition that RT "comes out of the linguistic discipline of pragmatics." See Anne Furlong, "Relevance Theory," 7.

²¹⁴ A third development came later and more gradually—the shift from a purely philosophical discipline to a cognitive linguistic discipline, wedding RT to theories of the mind.

²¹⁵ To use ordinary language within the discipline, Grice and subsequent pragmaticists use non-technical sounding terms (e.g., *talk exchange* and *what is said*) to name specific linguistic phenomena.

²¹⁶ Sperber and Wilson, "Pragmatics" (2007), 481.

²¹⁷ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 167–68, 171.

what is actually ‘stated’ rather than implied by a work, a substantial element of interpretation and inference is involved.”²¹⁸ Sperber and Wilson explain how this development fit into the history of the discipline:

A major development in pragmatics over the past thirty years (going much further than Grice envisaged) has been to show that the explicit content of an utterance, like the implicit content, is largely underdetermined by the linguistically encoded meaning, and its recovery involves a substantial element of pragmatic inference ...

Grice and others ... have tended to minimise the gap between sentence meaning and speaker’s meaning.... Relevance theorists have argued that relevance-oriented inferential processes are efficient enough to allow for a much greater slack between sentence meaning and speaker’s meaning, with sentence meaning typically being quite fragmentary and incomplete, and speaker’s explicit meaning going well beyond the minimal proposition arrived at by disambiguation and reference assignment.²¹⁹

The processes involved in Gricean pragmatics focus on how humans decipher referential speech and ambiguity, but RT holds that *all* communication has an inferential character. The distinction between the linguistically-encoded meaning of a sentence and the speaker’s intended meaning in uttering it is crucial in both schemes, but RT recognizes that speakers’ observable linguistic behaviors convey signals about *how* to understand the sentences they utter, not just *what* those sentences mean. Disambiguation and reference assignment are, nevertheless, necessary components in the larger inferential program of human comprehension. Let us now look at those basic processes.

a. Basic Pragmatic Processes

Although RT expanded the former boundaries of pragmatics, it recognizes the need for basic pragmatic processes in the interpretation of utterances. Pragmatic processing involves a number of tasks that a hearer’s mind employs selectively, *pro re nata*, without a prescribed sequence, rapidly, intuitively, and virtually simultaneously. Theorists logically delineate discrete tasks; but, from a functional standpoint, they are practically inseparable. A relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic will apply these processes as an initial step in evaluating and forming interpretations. They include resolving ambiguities, vaguenesses,

²¹⁸ “Relevance Theory,” 42.

²¹⁹ Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (2007), 473.

and indeterminacies; assigning referents; decoding deictic terms; restoring missing or ellipsed material; and recovering implicit content.²²⁰

Grice articulated somewhat common-sense assumptions about the rules speakers adhere to in the process of conversation. Foremost was the assumption of cooperation—the *cooperative principle*—that persons in a conversation observe certain unstated patterns of cooperation in order to make speech work. Under this principle, Grice outlined four maxims, one of them concerning *manner*.²²¹ The second sub-maxim under his *maxim of manner* is “Avoid ambiguity.”²²² This more narrow expectation emerges from the assumption of cooperation but does not prevent speakers from using ambiguous expressions. It would be virtually impossible, or at least intolerable, to exclude all expressions that are intrinsically ambiguous. Rather, he meant that competent speakers tend not to use expressions that are ambiguous *to their hearers*. We could phrase the sub-maxim as a rule in the following way: *Do not use expressions that will be difficult for your hearer to disambiguate.*

Assuming that a speaker or writer wishes to be understood, she will use expressions that are likely to be understood by her hearer or reader.²²³ For that purpose, she may likely use expressions that are unconventional or would be ambiguous to a third party or an eavesdropper but are easily decipherable by the intended audience. Combining this flexibility of language with the particularity of conversational, historical, and situational contexts, it is easy to see how people who are not from the original audience, such as modern readers of ancient texts (eavesdroppers), can misunderstand. They do not share the same cognitive environment or situational context. Green explains how narrow the contextual particularity can be:

According to RT, the *context* of an utterance is **not all the information** available from the discourse in which a sentence is embedded (such as a paragraph, a section of a book, or a book as a whole), the wider literary corpus of a particular author (such as the writing of Paul), nor the wider

²²⁰ Huang, “Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics,” 138–39, 141; Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (2007), 478–84. Although these theorists include supplying contextual assumptions and naming presuppositions necessary for coherence as component processes, we will focus on these in Chapter Two. They differ in kind from the basic processes listed here and involve more than enriching linguistically-encoded content.

²²¹ Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” 45–47. I do not focus on Gricean pragmatics or delineate its details, only those parts pertinent to the current discussion. His scheme is outlined succinctly by Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 57.

²²² Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” 46.

²²³ Throughout, I employ conventions of relevance theory editing, including referring to a generic or hypothetical speaker in the feminine and her hearer in the masculine. When referring specifically to the author of Titus, however, I will use the conventional masculine pronouns. Clark, *Relevance Theory*, xvii.

cultural context shared by communicators and their addressees (such as the history and cultures of the Jewish and wider Greco-Roman worlds). Rather, context is **a subset of all the salient or available information** to the communicator and the addressee, which is accessed in the communication of an utterance.²²⁴

Whereas Grice's starting point was an implicit contract between interlocutors that mainly influenced the *speaker's* behavior, Relevance theorists approach utterance interpretation as a cognitive process from the *hearer's* perspective. This subtle difference is theoretically important. RT endeavors to delineate how *hearers* think through language. The role of the hearer is crucial in Grice's scheme, but his key assumption of cooperation issues in a catalog of maxims that *speakers* supposedly follow.

Most Relevance theorists, although they appreciate Grice's groundbreaking legacy, insist that he did not adequately reckon the extent to which utterance meaning must be inferred. Lists of interpretive tasks offered by Relevance theorists are typically not universal or exhaustive, not because they lack agreement, but because they generally agree that interpreters cannot prescribe a sequence or standard list of necessary actions in the process of recovering meaning. Nevertheless, certain tasks are commonly needed. The following is a synthesis of similar lists found in the literature: disambiguation, reference assignment, recovery of ellipsed material, general enrichment processes, and the recovery of indirectly communicated implications—i.e., implicatures.²²⁵ Uchida provides the following list of basic pragmatic processes: “Three subtasks are involved here: (a) disambiguation, (b) identification of the reference of referring expressions, and (c) enrichment of the logical form or semantic representation of the sentence uttered.”²²⁶ As with other theorists, he does not intend this list to be exhaustive, detailed, or universal.

What distinguishes RT is how theorists regard all of these inferential processes as serving to decipher both explicit *and* implicit content and how they argue that a single principle of relevance governs their application in countless specific contexts. Comprehending explicit *and* implicit content and even accessing contextual assumptions require basic pragmatic processes. The discrete tasks into which theorists delineate these processes are essential; and they ground the comprehension of *higher-level explicatures*, to which we now turn.

²²⁴ Green, “Relevance Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” 268. My emphasis in bold, his italics.

²²⁵ E.g., Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 121.

²²⁶ “Text and Relevance,” 161–63.

b. *Higher-Level Explicatures*

Speakers are always communicating explicatures, which are assumptions necessary to properly understand the linguistically-encoded content of their speech. According to Uchida and Carston, an *explicature* is “an ostensively communicated assumption which is inferentially developed from the incomplete conceptual representation (logical form) resulting from linguistic decoding.”²²⁷

Suppose a commuter asks, *When is the train coming?* A listener might reasonably derive the explicature, *The speaker wishes to know* [when the train is coming]. This explicature is not only reasonable but *necessary* to comprehend her communicative intent. If the truth-conditions were right, responding verbally with *three o'clock* might be appropriate. A hearer adept at dealing with open questions would recognize this. If the commuter utters this example sentence (*When is the train coming?*) in a context in which it is a rhetorical question, the adept hearer will need to recognize a *higher-level explicature*. According to Uchida and Carston, a higher-level explicature “involves embedding the proposition expressed by the utterance in a higher level description such as a description of the speaker’s propositional attitude, a speech act description or some other comment on the embedded proposition.”²²⁸ Now, suppose everyone on the train platform is well aware of the time and the train schedule, but the train is quite late. Without any announcement, it is clear to everyone that the travelers are equally informed. Then, someone shouts, *When is the train coming?* [*guttural exhale*]. In such a context, a perfectly reasonable higher-level explicature might be *The speaker is agitated that she does not know* [when the train is coming] or *The speaker is frustrated that* [when the train is coming] *is no longer predictable*. An eye-roll and a tisk might be appropriate responses in this context, although they would be unacceptable responses to the open question in the former context. If one of the travelers responds with the scheduled arrival time (e.g., *three o'clock*), thinking it to be an open question, he might receive a retort of laughter or ridicule! Additional explicatures are possible, and hearers tend to be remarkably adept at intuiting which are appropriate.

In the example above, the circumstantial context restricted interpretation. Settings can restrict interpretation as much as the semantics of words, but speakers often embed higher-level explicatures *verbally*. Suppose the traveler said, *I’m not asking, When is the*

²²⁷ Carston and Uchida, *Relevance Theory*, 297; see also Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 78–79.

²²⁸ Carston and Uchida, *Relevance Theory*, 297; for further explanation, see also Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 208–11.

train coming? anymore. The higher-level explicature might be *The speaker has given up her effort to find out* [when the train is coming] or *The speaker is frustrated that* [when the train is coming] *is no longer predictable.* These explicatures concern the *speaker's attitude* toward a statement, and they are necessary for understanding the meaning of that statement.

The speaker's attitude is crucial to interpretation and it is an explicature—part of *what is said*, in Gricean terms.²²⁹ Therefore, discerning the speaker's attitude is an inferential task. When Clark lists the tasks involved in recovering explicatures, he includes disambiguation, reference assignment, the recovery of ellipsed material, narrowing down the intended meaning of vague terms, and deciding whether thoughts represented are being entertained by the speaker or attributed to someone else.²³⁰ Importantly, Sperber and Wilson also include the recovery of the speaker's attitude toward what is said in their list of tasks for pragmatic inference.²³¹ This recovery is paramount for understanding some kinds of speech, such as jokes, irony, and antagonistic rhetoric. Interpreters of Scripture who understand the array of inferential tasks that occur virtually simultaneously in a listener's mind can apply them systematically to Scripture as literature, because it constitutes a relatively fixed conversational contribution.

A speaker always communicates explicatures that convey her attitude toward what is said—that is, whether it is her own thought, whether it is her attribution of someone else's thoughts, and so forth. Recovering such information is critical. Ostensive inferential communication—the stock and trade of RT—involves a speaker making her communicative intention manifest. This making manifest implies a desire on the part of the speaker for sympathy. Rather than express her own idea directly, the speaker may present another person's idea with an implicit judgment so that her hearer has the opportunity to make the same judgment.²³² Her judgment may be an implicature, but the fact that the idea is not her own is usually an explicature. The speaker wants her audience to enter into her mental processes and conclude with her, feel with her, agree with her, be convinced with

²²⁹ As noted earlier, *explicatures* in RT overlap with *what is said* in Gricean pragmatics. They also overlap with *conventional implicatures*—linguistic forms that are not dependent upon truth conditions or lexical semantics but are derived from shared conventions (e.g., “That is all I am saying;” “You can ...” or “They say that ...” and many others). See Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 127–31.

²³⁰ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 166. Theorists use “missing or ellipsed material” and “implicit content” interchangeably. See, e.g., *ibid.*; cf. Sperber and Wilson, *Pragmatics*, 11.

²³¹ Sperber and Wilson, *Pragmatics*, 9.

²³² I will expand upon this idea, which is foundational for irony from a RT perspective, in Chapter Two under *Higher-Level Explicatures*.

her, and respond with her. Paul trusts that his readers will share his conclusions, including his attitude toward the ideas he presents. Now that I have introduced the two main aspects of the inferential nature of all communication that I will explore in detail in Chapter One, let us turn to the second key insight that I will apply in a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic—the role of the hearer in communication.

2. The Role of the Hearer in Communication

Relevance Theory shifts the focus from obligations communication presumes upon the speaker or writer, *à la* Gricean pragmatics, to cognitive processes hearers and readers engage in to infer meaning. As Sperber puts it, “relevance theory ... approaches verbal comprehension as a psychological process.”²³³ Like its kindred discipline, pragmatics, RT views communication as a cooperative endeavor, but this assumption uncovers meaning from the perspective of the hearer. *Why?* Because hearers’ success in human communication throughout history vouches for the success of speakers as comprehension completes the *talk exchange*.²³⁴ Appreciating the role of the hearer is especially crucial in biblical interpretation, because modern interpreters differ from earlier audiences in language, culture, experience, and other factors. They customarily have, therefore, mismatched contextual assumptions and see different aspects of the text as salient, thus skewing interpretation. Let us now consider how interpreters may account for and ameliorate these divergences.

a. Mismatched Contextual Assumptions

Hearers must supply some of the material needed to fill the gap left by language’s underdeterminacy. Theorists refer to this audience-supplied material as *contextual assumptions*. These assumptions combine with the utterance to yield enough cognitive effects to make the utterance satisfactorily relevant. The two main types of contextual assumptions are the *cognitive environment* (informational) and *implicated premises* (logical). These assumptions differ between interpreters in proportion to various kinds of distance (e.g., space, time, culture, language).

If biblical interpreters sketch the assumptions that ancient interlocutors shared plausibly, they can then derive implicatures and conclusions based on assumptions closer to those held by original audiences. I discuss and demonstrate such processes in Chapter

²³³ Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (2007), 495.

²³⁴ See Frank Brisard, “H.P. Grice,” *PPP* (2011): 104–24, at 113; Grice, “Further Notes on Logic and Conversation,” 41; Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (1981, 2007), *passim*.

Two, but I will first introduce the two types of contextual assumptions—*cognitive environment* and *implicated premises*—in more detail.

i. Cognitive Environment

A hearer's cognitive environment provides the informational assumptions needed to interpret an utterance. Specific historical-contextual information, from the macro (e.g., imperial) scale to the micro (e.g., domestic) scale, is included, but discursive context also significantly influences one's cognitive environment. Biblical exegetes normally bring historical facts and perspectives to bear upon an interpretation—*what was meant by what was said*. Based on insights about human cognition, however, a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic would accentuate two values: first, it would prioritize the evidence, recognizing that the discourse itself signals the comparative relevance of historical-contextual information; second, it would result in the evaluation of alternative interpretations upon a consistent set of criteria. RT essentially explains *how* hearers are able to understand utterances and, just as importantly, *why* non-original readers err. A fitting complement to the aim of explaining utterance interpretation is RT's capacity to explain why certain interpretations are less satisfactory. The outcome of a relevance-guided hermeneutic is not only an interpretation but the evidential basis for evaluating one interpretation over another.

Uchida and Carston define *cognitive environment* as follows: “the set of assumptions which are **manifest** to an individual at a given moment.”²³⁵ This does not include the hearer's encyclopedic knowledge of their world or the sum total of their memory; it is constantly changing and limited by matters of accessibility, which can be increased and decreased by several factors, including the utterances themselves.

Communicators' minds are the fund, machinery, and product of their speech; so what they say represents what is on their minds more reliably than general knowledge of monumental politics, popular religion, grammar, and culture. Interpreters can sketch the cognitive environment of ancient communicators through close linguistic analysis and relevance-guided historical and interdisciplinary inquiry. Evidence from the discourse grounds a plausible representation of communicators' shared cognitive environment. This evidence includes suggestions of mutual, layered assumptions about each other's memory and environment. The starting point, then, is the dialogue itself. Interpreters take cues from

²³⁵ Carston and Uchida, *Relevance Theory*, 295, their emphasis. See also Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 115. He builds a similar definition based on Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 1986.

the conversation as to which historical and other matters are pertinent rather than assuming that any historical fact was relevant *ex ante*.

Scholars already endeavor to augment their knowledge of the ancient world in order to adequately understand the original circumstances of biblical texts and to interpret them with faithfulness to their historical and literary context. It is impossible, however, to fully reconstruct the situational context of any biblical text. Guided by the principle of relevance, with sensitivity to the potential mismatch between audiences' contextual assumptions, interpreters should focus their historical and inter-disciplinary inquiries on signals from the text as they discern which aspects of history and culture are relevant to a specific conversation.

Hearers intuitively enrich the meanings of otherwise underdeterminative, linguistically-encoded speech with material from their cognitive environment. Adept speakers leverage their hearers' cognitive environment to fill the gaps. Factors such as recency of mention, salience, rhyme, and topical relation significantly influence people's available memories.²³⁶ A common illustration of the power of these features of discourse to affect a hearer's cognitive environment are statements like *Do not think about flying purple elephants*. In spite of the linguistically-encoded imperative meaning of the sentence, the hearer almost certainly has *flying purple elephants* on his mind. The sentence deliberately defeats itself. This power suggests, first, that the linguistically-encoded meaning of a sentence is not a determinative indicator of utterance meaning; and, second, that a relevance-guided hermeneutic could help interpreters to more strategically apply knowledge of history and custom, words and syntax.

Historical information, linguistic analysis, and sociological inquiry help to eliminate or subordinate certain interpretations in favor of others, so lacking a detailed understanding of the exact circumstances behind each utterance does not entirely prevent us from making some reasonable claims about a text's meaning. The literary context of utterances within a biblical book or NT epistle is a rich, albeit incomplete, source of evidence for sketching the cognitive environment of original communicators. The documents themselves reveal critical historical and situational knowledge. As Aageson points out regarding the PE, "Perhaps no other set of documents in the NT points to such a

²³⁶ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 104, 149; R. Reed Hunt, "Does Salience Facilitate Longer-Term Retention?" *Memory* 17 (2009): 49–53. Theorists highlight empirical studies of the Fodorian modularity of the mind hypothesis that have revealed factors that affect recall.

broad range of conflicted issues in the early church as do the epistles of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.”²³⁷ These texts especially aid investigation into particular problems within the early church. This may be most profoundly evident as they stand between the Apostle Paul and the contemporary church and render what the historical church has accepted as an authoritative interpretation and application of the Pauline apostolate. So, the utterances within their contexts in the form of the text that we have constitute the instance of *ostensive inferential communication* that interests relevance-guided biblical interpreters.²³⁸

The objectives, processes, and outcomes of relevance-guided historical inquiry would be distinct from those of various forms of socio-historical biblical interpretation. The ancient *world* is not the object of relevance-guided historical inquiry as much as the ancient *mind*, influenced by matters of language, social concern, everyday culture, political and economic circumstances. This kind of inquiry concerns itself with the thought-world of writers and readers, focusing on evidence from the texts themselves. The propositional thrust of an utterance is logically founded on a combination of the explicatures, derived from the linguistically-encoded form, and reasonable contextual assumptions.²³⁹ A plausible sketch of the cognitive environment of communication participants combines with implicated premises and a lexical-grammatical analysis of the logical form of an utterance to yield reasonable intermediate conclusions. But, for RT, propositions are not final. The end-product of comprehension is multi-dimensional, including the propositional as well as the social-behavioral, because what is truly *relevant* has real-world consequences.

In sum, the principle of relevance mediates the influence of monumental history and politics, archaeological and literary knowledge of daily life, lexicography and grammar upon interpretation. The text cues modern interpreters as to what aspects of history, language, anthropology, and so forth are pertinent to interpretation. Readers cannot assume *ex ante* that a city’s status under the Roman Empire, broad cultural shifts, details of household social relations, market practices, coinage, or any other *prescribed* set of facts are equally or entirely pertinent to a pericope under examination. Certain matters may be profoundly relevant; but the utterance within its context, rather than a general exegetical

²³⁷ Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*, 16.

²³⁸ Some speculate the canonical ordering of the PE as Titus, 1 Tim, 2 Tim on very little hard evidence. Based on how interpreters see the PE illuminating one another, they can decide this question at the stage of “establishing the text.” For my thesis, the canonical presentation suffices.

²³⁹ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 141.

rule, controls whether, which, and to what extent. The text is that component of the ancient environment that interpreters can have the most confidence of affecting readers' perceptions of the world, their thinking and their behavior. We now turn to the other major kind of contextual assumption—*implicated premises*. These pertain to the logic necessary to interpret utterances.

ii. Implicated Premises

Language is underdetermined not only informationally but also logically. Interpretation requires logical assumptions that cannot be derived solely on the basis of the linguistically-encoded meaning of the sentence uttered. Whereas hearers fill *informational* gaps in the underdeterminacy of language by drawing on content from their cognitive environment, they also fill *logical* gaps by supplying *implicated premises*.²⁴⁰ Levinson explains that, in order for a hearer to maintain the assumption of a speaker's cooperation, the hearer must assume some unstated premises, which the speaker takes for granted. As Levinson puts it, "It must be supposed that S think that q."²⁴¹ Many *intermediate* premises do not carry the final communicative thrust of an utterance or reflect its non-propositional dimensions.

An illustration might be helpful: Nearing dinnertime, I shout upstairs, "You can get the drinks." Here is the enriched propositional sentence meaning after disambiguation, reference assignment, and some basic pragmatic processes: *You, Barnabas David Allen, have the functional capacity to retrieve drinks of some kind that are somehow distinguished from other things (by the definite article)*. If that is what my son honestly interprets my utterance to mean, he will be puzzled and fail to perceive the relevance of my statement. It is this presumption of relevance that drives hearers to interpret utterances with more success. In order to understand my utterance as relevant, my son will need to assume the premise that no drinks are at the dinner table yet, even though my statement does not include that information. His assumption of relevance causes him to trust my cognitive environment, which includes real-time knowledge of the table setting. Further, he will understand that my use of the definite article distinguishes the drinks he will get as the drinks our family will imbibe at this evening's dinner *as long as* he complies.

Levinson outlines the logic of implicated premises as follows:

- (i) S has said that *p*

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 227.

²⁴¹ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 113; expanded below.

- (ii) there's no reason to think S is not observing ... the co-operative principle
- (iii) in order for S to say that *p* and be indeed observing the ... co-operative principle, S must think that *q*
- (iv) S must know that it is mutual knowledge that *q* must be supposed if S is to be taken to be co-operating
- (v) S has done nothing to stop me, the addressee, thinking that *q*
- (vi) therefore S intends me to think that *q*, and in saying that *p* has implicated *q*²⁴²

The speaker is a prime agent in Levinson's outline, but note how he describes the inferential process from the hearer's perspective. This logical outline of deriving implicated premises corresponds to the standard Relevance-theoretical approach.

The presumption of relevance combined with the fact that an utterance has been made can suggest certain implicated premises. Hearers infer both implicated premises and implicated conclusions dialectically employing "mutual enrichment processes"—that is, inferences at one level interact with linguistically-encoded content to make inferences at the next level.²⁴³ A mundane example demonstrates the dialectic between sentence-meaning and logical and informational contextual assumptions: Suppose that my wife and I share the assumption that I am waiting to take a shower. My wife says *Barney is out of the shower*. The sentence does not indicate that Barney was taking a shower; but any hearer would assume so, not because he derives it semantically or observes it contextually, but because he infers it logically. Because I know that our house has a single shower, I bring this real-world knowledge to the comprehension process as a contextual assumption, and I conclude that the only shower in our house is now available to me. Her utterance is relevant, because it means that I can now take a shower. The sentence is uninteresting informationally; Barney, in fact, spends most of his life *out of the shower*. It is only satisfyingly relevant if I assume both what is logically implied and contextually known. We turn now to the second major aspect of the hearer's role in communication—*salience*. Because it differs between cultures, salience demands the attention of relevance-guided biblical interpreters.

²⁴² See *ibid.*, 113–14. Because of the non-propositional dimensions of communication (Chapter Three), a statement of ability may only be relevant if the ability is employed, unless the purpose of the utterance was to implicate a judgment upon the ability of the hearer.

²⁴³ Uchida, "Text and Relevance," 161–62.

b. *Salience for Original Audiences versus Modern Eavesdroppers*

Because of the simple economy of comprehension, hearers accept interpretations that require the least effort as long as they yield appropriate cognitive effects and satisfy their expectations of relevance. Therefore, ideas that are *salient* can achieve greater relevance. Several factors may contribute to salience in the mind of a hearer (e.g., recency, repetition, boldness).²⁴⁴ To use an audiological metaphor, salient ideas have higher volume, because they speak more loudly than their less noisy neighbors within the context. In fact, they may be so loud that their less salient neighbors' voices recede. Unfortunately, modern interpreters hear statements at different volume levels than their original audiences. Consequently, modern readers may fulfill their expectations of relevance by taking as salient a different idea than the ancient writer had expected. What original audiences took as background information may sound more salient to modern audiences and *vice versa*.

This phenomenon corresponds to the problem of *figure* and *ground* ambiguity in Gestalt psychology. A hearer can accidentally or deliberately confuse the assertions that a speaker wants to convey with the background required to present them.²⁴⁵ Typically, cooperative interlocutors in an original conversational context have no problem distinguishing between front- and back-ground details, but modern eavesdroppers must be careful not to allow what is salient for them to drown out what the ancient speaker intended to convey.

According to Wilson and Sperber's communicative principle, hearers presume the optimal relevance of an utterance.²⁴⁶ Clark explains that this leads interpreters to "follow a path of least effort in deriving effects and ... stop when expectations of relevance are satisfied."²⁴⁷ Modern readers interpreting ancient texts complicate this process. Biblical scholars know that their situational context in the modern world does not supply all of the cognitive material necessary for interpretation, so they deliberately augment their available store of knowledge and exercise tentativeness.²⁴⁸ Such positive attitudes and behaviors ameliorate somewhat the tendency to interpret texts solely on the basis of a modern

²⁴⁴ Empirical studies show that humans have shorter recall times for topics, ideas, words, and domains that have been more recently contemplated, accessed, or stimulated, even if only in passing. See studies mentioned in Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 90–122.

²⁴⁵ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 177–81, esp. 180.

²⁴⁶ "Pragmatics" (2007), 474.

²⁴⁷ *Relevance Theory*, 37, 68–69, 120.

²⁴⁸ On tentativeness, which is critical and probably underrated, see Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 6.

cognitive environment, replete though it may be with historical knowledge. It is, nevertheless, difficult for modern readers to escape the gravitational pull of a salient (to them) interpretation.²⁴⁹ For example, the salience of *talent* as a word that has come to mean *ability*, rather than an arcane unit of measure, may be hard to overcome when interpreting the *Parable of the Talents* (Matt 25:14–30). Or, consider the tendency to attach the sense of *religious giving* to Jesus’s discourse on judgmentalism and forgiveness in Luke 6:27–42. The salience of *give* read as *tithes and offerings* is too powerful to resist even though it does not cohere with the discursive context. The church has bills to pay, for goodness’ sake!

To interpret ancient texts well, modern readers have to contend with the tempting salience of interpretations that emerge when Scripture collides with modern sensibilities. They do so by constructing reasoned estimations of ancient cognitive environments. This must be done with as much particularity and precision as the evidence suggests but with the tentativeness that our severe limitations require. The original audience’s knowledge and intuitions are not available to us, but RT illumines utterance interpretation in such a way as to allow us to sensitively and systematically follow the processes of natural language comprehension. As noted above, the end-products of interpretation, according to RT, are real-world outcomes, not mere propositions, so we now turn to the third and final insight that drives this thesis—the non-propositional dimensions of communication.

3. The Non-Propositional Dimensions of Communication

Language does more than convey information. Its inherent underdeterminacy suggests that information transfer may not even be the *primary* function of language. Scholars have indicated how prevalently speakers use language to accomplish other tasks.²⁵⁰ Relevance theorists use the term *cognitive effects* as technical language for what utterances produce when properly comprehended. The outcome of utterance interpretation is not merely a propositional form but a changed context.²⁵¹ So, communication is fully successful when its implications are realized, not simply when its propositions are understood. A speaker’s intention in ostensive inferential communication can rarely be reduced to a set of propositions. Hearers must recognize the real-world implications of utterances.

²⁴⁹ Furlong addresses problems with diachronic interpretation in “Relevance Theory,” 196–97.

²⁵⁰ In Chapter Three, I discuss some pertinent ideas from Speech-Act theory.

²⁵¹ Huang, “Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics,” 149–52; Furlong, “Relevance Theory,” 12; Stephen Bonnycastle, *In Search of Authority: An Introductory Guide to Literary Theory*, 3rd ed. (Broadview, 2007), 122.

Grice rightly contended that the linguistically-encoded form of an utterance stands in for a fuller sense of the speaker's meaning, but the interpretive end-product he assumed was basically informational, propositional. He considered other language uses to be special. Even with reference to speech acts, Grice taught that the implicatures of an utterance could ultimately be expressed in the form of enriched propositions.²⁵² In another development from Gricean pragmatics, RT recognizes that every utterance involves expectations about how its propositional content will translate into attitude and action on the part of the hearer. Understood in this way, imperatives are not entirely different from declaratives; just the syntax makes the speaker's intentions more or less transparent.²⁵³ According to Kevin J. Vanhoozer to comprehend Scripture in spite of our limitations is to recognize that "words demand things of us," regardless of our equivocations.²⁵⁴

Sperber and Wilson describe three components of an *enrichment* process that hearers follow to derive implicatures and explicatures from an utterance. Their description illuminates the non-propositional dimensions of communication. First, hearers develop the linguistically-encoded logical form to arrive at explicatures; second, they discern the intended contextual assumptions (e.g., time of day, stakeholders, topic); and, third, they construct the implications of the utterance (i.e., implied content that is necessary for relevance and its actionable conclusions).²⁵⁵ In natural language as empirically observed, these processes frequently lead to implications beyond the acquisition of knowledge. Actionable conclusions are outcomes of the interpretive process.

Suppose that hours after instructing my teenager to clean her room, she lies on the couch. She is displeased to hear me say, *Your room has not been cleaned yet*. Her displeasure does not result from receiving disappointing information that she did not have before I spoke. The essential function of my utterance is not informational. My daughter's displeasure comes from the *implications* of the utterance—my attitude of disapproval toward the proposition encoded by my statement, the negative moral connotations of her lack of obedience that I intimate, and the inconvenience of apparently being expected to

²⁵² See "Logic and Conversation," 53–54. For an alternative development of Grice's approach to non-informational language uses, see Joana Garmendia, "A (Neo)Gricean Account of Irony: An Answer to Relevance Theory," *Int.Rev.Prag.* 7 (2015): 40–79.

²⁵³ Robyn Carston, "Truth-Conditional Semantics," *PPP* (2011): 280–88, at 286–287.

²⁵⁴ "Discourse on Matter: Hermeneutics and the 'Miracle' of Understanding," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 (2005): 5–37, at 34. See entire conclusion (34–37) for full and nuanced argument.

²⁵⁵ See Sperber and Wilson, "Pragmatics" (2007), 481. This is my simplified summary of their enrichment process.

cease her current leisure to comply with my previous instructions. Other implications may be possible, but these seem strongly implied. My daughter might correctly arrive at *actionable conclusions*, but even her discomfoting emotional response is a *non-propositional* outcome of my utterance inasmuch as I intend or expect it.

Utterances can have greater or lesser non-propositional dimensions, and an interpretive method that is informed by cognitive linguistics can help readers identify and appreciate them. So, we will now overview RT's definition of cognitive effects—the actual outcomes of speech—and their customary social and behavioral correlates.

a. The Economy of Cognitive Effects and Processing Effort

Theorists outline three basic kinds of positive cognitive effects that hearers can derive: 1) a contextual implication, 2) strengthening an existing assumption, and 3) contradicting an existing assumption.²⁵⁶ Clark defines a cognitive effect as “a change in an individual's representation of the world.”²⁵⁷ These cognitive effects are *positive* because they have a net impact on hearers' representations of the world, not because they *benefit* hearers. Hearers intuitively seek these effects, whether the consequence promises to be pleasant or unpleasant. Hearers act upon their outward world based on these representations; therefore, internal cognitive effects indirectly but inevitably affect a shared material environment.²⁵⁸ Modern readers of the Bible must deliberately seek to discern implicatures that would have led to cognitive effects satisfying to original audiences even if those effects do not interest the modern reader.

Hearers typically expend a level of energy commensurate with the anticipated power of the cognitive effect—greater effects should reward greater processing effort. So, economy is a rule for deriving implicatures as well as for constructing utterances. Speakers can be more efficient, and thereby effective, by relying on accessible memories or prominent features of their shared cognitive environment to form implied premises; for, as Sperber and Wilson claim, hearers “follow a path of least effort.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ See, e.g., Nam Sun Song, “Metaphor and Metonymy,” *RTAI* (1998): 87–104, at 90; Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 364; Blass, *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 44.

²⁵⁷ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 77–78.

²⁵⁸ Although this comment treads upon the socio-cultural and cognitive-behavioral dimensions of pragmatics that I identified as outside the scope of my thesis, recognizing this boundary area that interpretation naturally leads toward is critical for appreciating that the task of interpretation does not end with a set of propositions but rather with a set of deeds.

²⁵⁹ See Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (2007), 474. This is the first general step in what they call a “Relevance-guided comprehension heuristic.” For a summary, see Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 34–40.

Theorists speak in terms of *processing effort* because RT considers communication from the hearer's perspective.²⁶⁰ When speech is straightforward, hearers can derive cognitive effects without much effort. Anaphoric referential speech, for example, requires less effort to process than cataphoric referential speech, because the antecedent reference is already in mind and requires no suspension or place-holding. Among the factors that affect processing effort and, thereby, the relevance of an utterance, Clark lists, "recency of use, frequency of use, perceptual salience, ease of retrieval from memory, linguistic or logical complexity, and size of the context."²⁶¹ These factors affect the accessibility of contextual assumptions. So, vividness, brevity, and recency, for instance, are factors that can decrease processing effort. An adept speaker intuitively adjusts the economy of her utterances to avoid pitfalls that could make them less relevant. Too much vividness could distract; brevity could fail to supply critical details; and recency could confuse referents, for example. Modern readers of ancient texts cannot intuitively discern such fine-tuning. They need more conscious, deliberate practices.

Along with their principle of relevance, Sperber and Wilson outline certain hypotheses about the economy of cognitive effects. They claim that "other things being equal, the more contextual implications a proposition has, the more relevant it will be, and that other things being equal, the greater processing effort it requires, the *less* relevant it will be."²⁶² So, in brief, the higher the quantity of contextual implications, the more relevant; and the more efficient (i.e., the less "processing effort"), the more relevant.

Reaching further back in memory, deciphering obscure references, untangling complex logic, or interpreting vague or ambiguous speech typically increases processing effort, but the expense can be worthwhile if the hearer derives sufficient cognitive payoff. Poetry, for instance, appears, on the surface, to break some economic rules of communication. Rather than being straightforward, it is typically elliptical and ambiguous. Yet, it gives people many cognitive rewards.²⁶³

The economy of ostensive inferential communication is not a single-value system such that shorter statements are necessarily more relevant than longer statements or that

²⁶⁰ e.g., Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 106, 365.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁶² *Pragmatics*, 20.

²⁶³ Regarding poetry, Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. and Markus Tendahl acknowledge that "we are sometimes willing to spend quite a deal of effort in utterances with the expectation of gaining some extra benefits." See "Cognitive Effort and Effects in Metaphor Comprehension: Relevance Theory and Psycholinguistics," *Mind & Language* 21 (2006): 379–403, at 389.

perspicuous statements are necessarily more relevant than ambiguous ones simply because longer or more ambiguous statements require greater processing effort. The calculus has multiple factors. It is true that hearers tend to “follow a path of least effort,”²⁶⁴ but hearers who expect the cognitive effects to be great enough will expend more effort. Hearers, however, do not consciously decide on how much effort to expend. They work out the implicatures of ambiguous speech virtually involuntarily, because the assumption of relevance and the promise of cognitive effects are inherent in utterances.

Comprehension involves a process of *mutual adjustment* whereby hearers negotiate the implications of explicit and implicit content. *Mutual adjustment* evokes the process’s dialectic nature. Hearers adjust their understanding of an utterance’s explicatures and implicatures until they infer conclusions that yield adequate cognitive effects. So, hearers accept the word meanings and speaker attitudes, for instance, that they must assume in order for their interpretation to achieve optimal relevance (i.e., the greatest available cognitive effects).²⁶⁵

Indirect or non-literal speech typically requires more processing effort; but it can be potent, yielding greater cognitive effects than similar propositions uttered literally, making the expenditure worthwhile. Non-literal speech can also provide hearers a shortcut to comprehension, actually decreasing processing effort. Many Relevance theorists regard literal and figurative uses of language to be degrees on a sliding scale.²⁶⁶ The implicatures of figurative language are a subset of all possible implicatures of the same utterance, but interpreting a speaker’s figurative use of language literally will usually deny the hearer adequate cognitive effects. Therefore, natural language listeners are usually able to detect figurative use and interpret appropriately.

Consider an example: *Lance is my dog* and *Lance is my best friend* can both have literal and figurative meanings; they can also be synonymous when one is figurative while the other is literal. Either could stand in for *Lance is a pet canine that I care for and that belongs in my household* or *Lance is a human confidant with whom I have an affectionate relationship*.²⁶⁷ Given the conversational context, a hearer will rapidly and virtually involuntarily arrive at the proper interpretation, deriving satisfactory cognitive effects.

²⁶⁴ Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (2007), 474; Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 37, 69, 120.

²⁶⁵ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 242.

²⁶⁶ Deirdre Wilson, “The Pragmatics of Verbal Irony: Echo or Pretence?” *Lingua* 116 (2006): 1722–43; Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 253–79 (Ch. 9—Figurative Language: Metaphor).

²⁶⁷ I take several intermediate assumptions for granted to derive these implicatures.

Increased personal knowledge is an inevitable result. Imagine the difference between a figurative use and a literal use. A literal use can increase social distance, while a figurative use can decrease it. A statement like *Lance isn't my dog; he's my best friend* can have multi-dimensional (e.g., social, cognitive) effects. It does not merely inform; it invites the hearer into the speaker's personal life, her affection for and valuation of a family member, thereby strengthening social bonds. Figurative language, therefore, has the potential to produce strong cognitive effects when deployed strategically, even though more direct, literal uses may be easier to process.

Relevance theorists regard cognitive effects as the primary outcomes of communication, but these *internal* effects in the hearer's mind have profound influence on interlocutors' *external* world. They are interpersonal, social and frequently intended to materially affect behavior.²⁶⁸ These may be indirect outcomes that the speech and the speaker cannot control, but they are not of secondary importance. A relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic must consider these non-propositional dimensions of speech.

b. Social and Behavioral Outcomes

Cognitive effects are changes in how a hearer perceives the world in his mind. As at least one theorist has summarized, $context^1 + utterance = context^2$.²⁶⁹ *Context*² essentially constitutes a new environment. The three basic kinds of positive cognitive effects—contextual implications, strengthening existing assumptions, and contradicting existing assumptions—lead to commensurate, albeit indirect, *external* outcomes. A biblical writer's intentions toward such outcomes are often transparent, but natural language listeners are adept at perceiving them even when they are not semantically obvious.

Pertinent to my inquiry, Speech-Act Theory (SAT), as first advanced by John L. Austin, delineates logically distinct dimensions of speech as simultaneous acts. A *locution* is a direct act of speaking something that has sense and reference. An *illocution*, intrinsic to many (and some argue all) locutions, is an act accomplished by speaking the *locution* (e.g., inviting, arguing, promising, forgiving) in the right felicity conditions. A *perlocution* is generally accomplished by the speaker only with the hearer's cooperation or up-take (e.g., informing, convincing, surprising, grieving, as transitive acts).²⁷⁰ Richard S. Briggs's

²⁶⁸ Additionally, although not germane to my thesis, theorists are beginning to test the neurological and physiological affects of speech.

²⁶⁹ I do not think that I originated this formulation, but I cannot recall where I saw it.

²⁷⁰ Helpfully summarized in Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 38–43; originally proposed in John L. Austin, *How to Do*

published dissertation discusses the implications of SAT for biblical studies. With respect to meaning-making agency, he presents SAT mainly from the perspective of what speakers accomplish. Because perlocution is not guaranteed, it is not considered intrinsic to speech. So, Briggs elevates self-involvement as a critical criterion for identifying and understanding illocution.²⁷¹ Perlocution, as an indirect act, however, is commensurate with intention in speech. I will address the relationship between SAT and RT in Chapter Three. For now, my general point is that language not only affects the mind; it affects a shared world, even if indirectly.

Commonplace figures, devices, and modes of speech do more than simply inform. For instance, Nam Sun Song outlines some of the relational effects that obtain with the use of metaphor.²⁷² He points out that some cognitive effects specifically reinforce camaraderie, trust, a sense of privileged insight or social inclusion, a sense that the speaker is vulnerable and trusting, drawing listeners into a shared experience. Song admits that some of these effects are based on weak implicatures; that is, they may not constitute the central communicative content of an utterance, but they are intentional and can be rhetorically powerful.²⁷³ In rhetorical terms, they may lead to increased *ethos*.

The Epistle to Titus provides examples where Paul's speech held crucial social implications. Consider his affectionate language in the greeting of Titus: *to [my] true son, Titus, according to [our] shared faith* (1:4). The communicative context, more than the semantics of the constituent words, conveyed social intimacy; the first-person pronouns supplied in translation are meant to convey the effect. As a letter read before a community, this was a public display of affection. Paul also effectively transferred a mantle of authority to Titus when he wrote, *these [things] teach and encourage and rebuke with every sanction; no one [is to] disregard you* (2:15). Such a statement in its context does not merely transmit information; it bolsters confidence, courage, and accountability beyond the linguistically-encoded semantic values. It implies Paul's authority vested in Titus.

Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, 2nd ed., The William James Lectures (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 83–108; see also Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 236. Whether they consider some or all locutions to carry illocutionary force depends on the theorist.

²⁷¹ See Briggs, *Words in Action*.

²⁷² Song, "Metaphor and Metonymy," 94.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

Ambiguity and non-literal speech requires trust, because speakers must rely upon hearers to derive the correct meaning. Ken-Ichi Seto contends that irony, a mode of speech that presumably requires comparatively more processing effort, yields positive relational effects.²⁷⁴ For example: Suppose a speaker witnesses someone committing an idiotic act then says to her neighbor, *What a genius!* Her hearer feels invited into an inside joke and derives significant effects beyond the propositional payload. The speaker could simply say, *I think that person has done an idiotic act*; but, by doing so, she would not also invite her hearer to enjoy a snicker with her. The cognitive effects or rewards of good utterance interpretation can involve a valuable connection with the speaker or other social outcomes.

Through the three key insights discussed above, RT is able to suggest why some interpretations are less likely than others and why certain interpretations should be favored, without resorting to a confessional, emotional, or traditional appeal. Given that, as I argue, conventional interpretations of the Cretan quotation of Titus 1:12 are unsatisfactory, *How can Relevance Theory illuminate interpretations of Titus 1:12?* I explain and demonstrate the application of these key insights from RT in the body of my thesis.

III. Thesis Statement and Explanation

Prevalent readings of Titus 1:12 and its famous Cretan quotation are unsustainable on linguistic, literary and historical grounds; so I apply key insights from Relevance Theory to incisively evaluate previous interpretations and to discern a historically and linguistically responsible reading, thereby also suggesting the promise of a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic.

I have already stated and supported two claims: first, that prevailing interpretations of the Cretan quotation of Titus 1:12 are unsustainable and, second, that insights from RT may supply grounds for both critiquing unsatisfactory interpretations and illuminating more linguistically sound ones. I now explain how I will proceed with this thesis.

Explanation

The three insights from RT that govern the structure of this study are global insights with theory-wide importance. Although I do not describe the theory in full detail, I provide sufficient explanation for my readers to, first, grasp how the specifics that I address fit into the theory; second, appreciate its impact upon interpretations of Titus 1:12; and, third,

²⁷⁴ Seto, “On Non-Echoic Irony,” 244–5.

discern the value of a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic for interpreting Scripture generally.

Each of the next three chapters corresponds to one of the three key insights outlined above: Chapter One—*The Inferential Nature of All Communication*, Chapter Two—*The Hearer’s Role in Communication*, and Chapter Three—*The Non-Propositional Dimensions of Communication*. In each, I will explain the key insight more thoroughly and apply it to Titus 1:12 and representative interpretations thereof while identifying some specific values and practices involved in a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic.

In due course, I propose an interpretation that I think coincides better with the evidence; namely, that Paul was rebuking bigotry in the Cretan church, not participating in it. If RT can help interpreters read this problematic passage with greater clarity, it can potentially illuminate other texts. I will finish this introduction by outlining the context into which my research fits and the specific contributions I see it making.

Context and Contribution

1. A Strategy for Applying RT to Biblical Texts

I demonstrate a strategy for applying key insights of RT to the interpretation of biblical texts. Applying these insights allows me to evaluate previous interpretations from a fresh perspective that has not been widely applied to the Bible. While I am conscious of their broader applicability to other texts, I apply them intensively and rigorously to the interpretation of Titus. This approach recommends itself particularly to the interpretation of problematic texts—i.e., texts with a contentious and unresolved history of interpretation.

2. A Contribution to Critical Secondary Literature on Titus and the Pastoral Epistles

The juncture of Biblical Studies and RT is still quite new. Some scholars have outlined strategic applications of Relevance-theoretical principles to the task of biblical interpretation and translation.²⁷⁵ Few, however, have organized entire studies around RT principles and demonstrated the results.²⁷⁶ More commonly, the theory illumines particular points.²⁷⁷ But, no biblical scholar to my knowledge has yet given a concentrated or

²⁷⁵ E.g., Gene L. Green, “Relevance Theory and Biblical Interpretation;” Ernst-August Gutt, *Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation* (Dallas: SIL International, 1992).

²⁷⁶ E.g., Joseph D. Fantin, *Lord of the Entire World: Lord Jesus, a Challenge to Lord Caesar?* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011); Stephen W. Pattemore, *Souls under the Altar: Relevance Theory and the Discourse Structure of Revelation* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2003).

²⁷⁷ E.g., Benson Goh, “Honoring Christ, Subverting Caesar: Relevance-Historical Reconstruction of the Context of Ephesians as an Honorific Discourse Praising Jesus the Great Benefactor” (PhD Diss., Asbury

thorough treatment to Titus or the Pastorals using a Relevance-theoretical approach. For the most part, Relevance-theoretical insights have been restricted to informing the translation of these texts.²⁷⁸ So, I shed fresh light on the issues by applying a strategy of evaluation and interpretation that has not been used with Titus before. This constitutes a unique contribution to material on Titus and the Pastorals—a critical view of critical views. Although I ultimately aim for my work to resolve an impasse, it at least offers an alternative approach and a plausible interpretation.

3. An interpretation of the message of Titus for the modern church that corresponds to its ancient meaning

On the basis of my research, I propose an interpretation of Titus 1:12 that does not rely on *prima facie* reading assumptions but that emerges from sound linguistic analysis. I argue that the writer of Titus is not affirming the substance of the Cretan quotation; rather, he is addressing and rebuking a form of bigotry in the church. Each of the three Relevance-theoretical insights reinforces the notion that Paul exposes, corrects, and restoratively rebukes bigotry in the church and does not tacitly participate in it. This interpretation has a great deal of import and applicability for the modern church, which continues to be fraught with classist tendencies, religio-cultural one-upmanship, and bald-faced bigotry. Furthermore, self-examination regarding the church's comfort level with the *prima facie* interpretation may also lead to healthy repentance and restoration.

4. Suggested implications for the history and canonical esteem of Titus and the Pastoral Epistles

My thesis and its interpretative results suggest implications for the history and canonical esteem of Titus and the Pastorals that call into question the presumed scholarly consensus and conventional assumptions about their *Kompositionsgeschichte* and their *Sitz im Leben*. Although my thesis will stand whether or not critics initiate or accept such a reevaluation, this is an important implication of the reading that I propose.

Theological Seminary, 2017); Yael Klangwisan, *Earthing the Cosmic Queen: Relevance Theory and the Song of Songs* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014);

²⁷⁸ E.g., Philip W. Goodwin, *Translating the English Bible: From Relevance to Deconstruction* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013); Stephen W. Pattemore, "On the Relevance of Translation Theory," *RevExp* 108 (2011): 263–77; Karen H. Jobes, "Relevance Theory and the Translation of Scripture," *JETS* 50 (2007): 773–97.

Chapter One – The Inferential Nature of All Communication

Natural language users bridge a significant gap between the semantics of words and syntax in a sentence, on one hand, and the speaker's intended meaning, on the other. Huang explains, "In Anglo-American pragmatics, it has been widely accepted that the linguistically encoded meaning of a sentence radically underdetermines the proposition a speaker expresses when he or she utters that sentence. This is generally known as the linguistic underdeterminacy thesis."¹ Several scholars argue that RT applies to written communication inasmuch as authors intend to affect readers just as speakers do hearers.² A major difference is the amount of time allowed for producing and processing text versus speech. Because the insights of RT apply no less to interpreting textual communication than spoken, they illuminate biblical interpretation.

Linguistic pragmaticists recognize that communication involves inference. The words, syntax, and discourse features of *what is said* leave much for audiences to infer. *What is said* is Grice's semi-technical language for explicit speech (sentences as uttered), as distinct from *what is meant*, which for him was a propositional form enriched by pragmatic processes.³ The meaning of an utterance is not equal to the value of the words and syntax even in a semantically decoded propositional form. As Regina Blass explains, "The grammars of natural languages fall far short of relating utterances to the thoughts they were designed to convey."⁴ Hearers must and, in fact, successfully do make countless inferences in order to comprehend utterances.

In what follows, I will address two facets of this key insight that I call *Basic Pragmatic Processes* and *Higher-Level Explicatures*. These two facets correspond to a development in the discipline from Gricean pragmatics to Sperber and Wilson's RT. According to RT, hearers must make inferences not only at the linguistic decoding level but also at the second-order conceptual level. In fact, studies of language acquisition have

¹ "Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics," 153. For an iteration in the context of biblical scholarship, see Green, "Relevance Theory and Theological Interpretation," 79. For an explanation pertaining to verbal irony, see Wilson, "Pragmatics of Verbal Irony," 1733.

² Uchida, "Text and Relevance"; Blass, *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 43–92; Silviu Serban, "Gricean Pragmatics and Text Linguistics," *Annals of Spiru Haret University, Journalism Studies* 12 (2011): 96–101.

³ See "Logic and Conversation," 44, 46, 51, 52, 58, *et passim*.

⁴ Blass, *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 42.

shown that both levels are inherent to comprehension.⁵ In this chapter, I explain and demonstrate the application of these two facets to the specific features of Titus 1:12 and propose general guidelines grounded in this insight for what I am calling a *relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic*.

I. Basic Pragmatic Processes

Sentences are formal and symbolic, comprised of words and their syntactical arrangements apart from presentational factors such as intonation and visual signals (e.g., eye roll, gesture). By *sentence*, Relevance theorists technically mean the “linguistically-encoded semantic representation” or the “logical form.”⁶ *Utterances* are *sentences* spoken or written within specific social and discursive contexts. In order to discern how hearers grasp utterance meaning, given the underdeterminacy of sentences, Relevance theorists apply what I categorize as *basic pragmatic processes* to arrive at a propositional form. This artificial form expands the sentence’s details and is as precise as the sentence allows and as open-ended as it requires. Clark explains, “Within relevance theory, the proposition expressed is the propositional form arrived at by fleshing out a linguistically-encoded semantic representation.”⁷ Basic pragmatic processes are required to accomplish this “fleshing out;” but this procedure is not equivalent to interpretation, which involves more than semantic decoding.⁸

Relevance theorists observe that natural language comprehension is typically a real-time process that does not require intermediate steps. That is, hearers do not go through two separate processes—one, in which they decode a semantic representation into a full proposition, and another, in which they interpret the proposition according to higher-level contextual assumptions. Audiences work on both levels simultaneously, dialectically. So, theorists distinguish *logically* between what I am calling *basic pragmatic processes* (Clark’s “fleshing out”) and second-order processing—that is, thoughts about thoughts or meta-analysis, of which *higher-level explicatures* are a type. Theorists do not, however, claim that these two levels are sequential.

⁵ See Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 282.

⁶ E.g., Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 200, 244, 299. See also, Sperber and Wilson, *Pragmatics*, 6–7, 32 and Meadowcroft, “Relevance as Mediating Category,” 622.

⁷ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 200.

⁸ Huang, “Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics,” 136, 152.

As natural language users ourselves, we readily acknowledge the gap between sentence meaning and utterance meaning, and we recognize that hearers regularly bridge that gap to successfully understand speakers. For the sake of biblical interpretation, Gene L. Green asks, “How, then, do we fill the gap between sentence and utterance meaning?”⁹ Pragmatic inference is the process by which humans fill the gap, and Relevance theorists define the tasks and constraints involved. Green continues, “The gap between sentence meaning and utterance meaning is filled by an inferential process constrained by the principle of relevance.”¹⁰ Through this principle, theorists articulate a simple, coherent framework for understanding how pragmatic processes function, especially when pragmatic steps conflict with one another—for example, when the cognitive effects upon a listener of using an ambiguous statement outweigh the risks to the speaker of being misunderstood.

Basic pragmatic processes are tasks that must be accomplished in order to decode the “logical form” and to achieve higher-level (or *second-order*) comprehension. This does not imply a necessary sequence. These aspects of comprehension occur simultaneously or dialectically in real time. Hearers typically need to understand what pronouns refer to, what sense of a word the speaker uses, and so forth. So, pragmatic processes include disambiguation and reference assignment, as well as an array of tasks intended to resolve vagueness and indeterminacy or restore ellipsed material. These tasks include discerning the meaning of explicit and implicit logical connectives, analyzing lexical pragmatics, and deciding where to place items on the literal-figurative continuum.

In their seminal overview of pragmatics, Sperber and Wilson outline the pragmatic tasks that are employed in the interpretation of utterances as follows:

The choice of an actual interpretation involves a variety of related tasks: disambiguation, reference assignment, resolution of vaguenesses or indeterminacies and restoration of missing or ellipsed material. These tasks are genuinely pragmatic and must be handled by a theory of utterance interpretation rather than a theory of sentence meaning [semantics].¹¹

Over the past several decades, Sperber and Wilson have become leaders in the field of pragmatics and have refined their ideas, but they have made only slight changes to what they outlined as the main tasks of pragmatics.¹² In the following sections, as I apply select

⁹ Green, “Relevance Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” 267.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹¹ Sperber and Wilson, *Pragmatics*, 2.

¹² See Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (2007), esp. 478–84.

aspects of pragmatic processing that are especially relevant for interpreting Titus 1:12, I cover the tasks outlined above under categories that fit the material under examination. The first category is *Referential and Deictic Speech*.

Referential and Deictic Speech

Referentials are words and phrases that stand in for a more specific referent or *target* (e.g., *someone, it, that*). The meanings of *deictic* words depend upon their conversational or discourse context (e.g., *now, I, here*). Both types of words are context-dependent. With both reference and deixis, processing effort is crucial in weighing alternative interpretations, because these types of speech widen the gap of indeterminacy by supplying less specific semantic information. Take the following sentence for example: *I like it, and so do they*. In the second clause, *do* efficiently replaces the verb and object of the first. The words *it* and *they* also have a referential function. The referents are outside the sentence and would normally be in the conversational context. The adverb *so* has a deictic and a discursive function; it points to the kind of action and expresses a context-specific relationship of comparison between the two propositions.

Referential and deictic speech typically identifies a prominent element in the discourse or in the conversational context. This kind of speech is most often *anaphoric*. That is, the target has usually already been mentioned within the near context. Levinson describes anaphora as “where some term picks out as referent the same entity (or class of objects) that some prior term in the discourse picked out.”¹³ When speakers or writers use an alternative word or phrase to refer to or replace a word or phrase from *earlier* in the context, it is anaphoric. *Cataphoric* references require more processing effort, because they force the hearer to suspend the more ambiguous reference until he hears what it is pointing to later in the conversation. According to Dan Cristea and Oana-Dianna Postolache, “a cataphoric relation is given by a pair of coreferring mentions in which the first one introduces the referent and is information-poorer than the subsequent one.”¹⁴ Michael B. Smith claims that cataphoric pronouns are not superfluous or ornamental but have a specific function. He compares the function achieved by “shell nouns” (examples of which grammarians often refer to as *casus pendens*) which are also cataphoric.¹⁵ Smith’s

¹³ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 67.

¹⁴ Dan Cristea and Oana-Diana Postolache, “How to Deal with Wicked Anaphora?” *AP* 263 (2005): 17–46, at 36.

¹⁵ See “Cataphoric Pronouns as Mental Space Designators: Their Conceptual Import and Discourse Function,” in *Cognitive and Communicative Approaches to Linguistic Analysis*, ed. Ellen Contini-Morava,

description of their linguistic function clearly expects greater-than-usual processing effort (i.e., suspending a *mental space* to await the referent). Speakers might use cataphora to catch hearers off-guard, to build suspense for effect, or to briefly topicalize a subject; but as Smith explains, “Cataphors are appreciably less common than anaphors.”¹⁶ Cristea and Postolache summarize a corpus analysis that shows “cataphorae” occurring fewer than one in two hundred and fifty uses of referential speech.¹⁷ Writers may use reference and deixis to avoid repetition, but their choice of which alternative to use frequently contributes to the meaning of its target by signaling *how* to conceive of it.

Because anaphora relies on a known target fresh from the preceding context, it requires significantly less processing effort. Empirical studies of language and neuroscience have demonstrated what linguists have hypothesized, namely, that “recency of use” decreases processing effort.¹⁸ We will now look more closely at these kinds of speech in Titus, starting with *Reference*.

1. *Reference*

Referentials exhibit various kinds of ambiguity that can indicate or identify a more specific target in the world *outside* the text (e.g., a topic of conversation), *within* the text (e.g., a character), or created *by* the text (e.g., a logical claim or grammatical feature). This last kind may be labelled *discourse referential*. Gradeschoolers learn that speakers can use referentials for style and convenience, but choosing referentials over narrower descriptive terms or choosing one type of referential over another also has pragmatic benefits. These choices contribute to meaning beyond simply replacing another more specific word. In this section, I will disambiguate several referentials in Titus 1:10–16 and argue that they consistently point to troublemakers in the Cretan church, not to Cretans in general. The pronouns of this passage are pivotal to understanding Paul’s meaning. Although assigning referents is a relatively basic task, doing so correctly is a critical part of interpretation.

Robert S. Kirsner, and Betsy Rodriguez-Bachiller, vol. 51, *Studies in Functional and Structural Linguistics* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2004), 61–90.

¹⁶ “Cataphoric Pronouns,” 63.

¹⁷ “How to Deal,” 40.

¹⁸ See Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 104. He references studies of Fodoran modularity that tested information association and retrieval on the basis of structures proposed by philosopher and cognitive scientist Jerry Fodor. Although Fodor’s proposals regarding the modular structuring of the mind are speculative and difficult to test directly, several indirect tests suggest that his ideas about processing speed and information retrieval have predictive power.

Misconstruing a referent can lead to profound misinterpretation. Therefore, understanding where interpreters have assumed false referents and why those misconstruals had seemed so apt is crucial in evaluating their interpretations.

Paul introduced a large group (*many [people]*, πολλοί 1:10) of presumptive, unsanctioned leaders over whom he repeatedly expressed angst (1:11; 2:8, 15; 3:9–11).¹⁹ The exegetical phrase *especially those of the circumcision* (μάλιστα οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς, 1:10) refers not to the entire category of troublemakers but to a (probably numerically) significant portion of them. Mounce cites ancient evidence that there were a significant number of Jews living in Crete in the first-century CE.²⁰ Quinn recognizes that this phrase refers almost exclusively to Jewish Christians—Jewish in ethnicity, Christian in faith, and Cretan only in geographic residence. Yet, he claims that Paul uses the Cretan quotation to target them, too.²¹ Although scholars are not confident that, historically speaking, Paul is addressing a problem of Jew-Gentile relations within the Cretan church; nevertheless, he likely used this phrase to activate the assumption that Jewish believers were *en force* among the troublemakers. Several statements in Titus strongly suggest that those who ascribed to and elevated features of Jewish religious culture were instilling a sense of ethno-religious inferiority in Cretan believers. I discuss this evidence in Chapter Two under *Cognitive Environment*. Presumptive leaders impressed upon believers that those not adhering to the trappings of Jewish religious culture were second-class. That teaching, of course, was contrary to Paul’s gospel and *healthy doctrine* (1:9, 13; 2:1–2, 8); furthermore, it *upset entire households* (1:11). We may not know the extent to which this represents a

¹⁹ Although the effect upon my thesis is negligible, one textual variant in Titus 1:10 deserves comment. It includes καί and reads as follows: Εἰσὶν γὰρ πολλοὶ καὶ ἀνυπότακτοι. It is one of the few plausible variants in this section of Titus. The καί appears in D F G I Ψ 1739 and some other, especially Western and Byzantine, texts. The UBS⁵ gives the variant a “C” rating. The questionable text subtly affects Paul’s introduction of the troublemakers. Without καί, πολλοί (1:10) is an attributive adjective, as most English translations convey. The variant has more than one translational possibility. Bruce M. Metzger judges the alternative reading as either a case of awkward hendiadys (using two descriptors in a parallel construction to attribute a single compound quality—e.g., *nice and easy*) or straightforward attributive speech. See *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 1994), 584–85. Marshall says that the variant reading results in pleonasm—using extra words to describe the problematic offenders. He suggests that it may have been original but that it was dropped by scribes. See *Critical and Exegetical*, 193. The main translational choice is between *there are many insubordinate ones* (accepted reading) or *there are many and insubordinate ones* (variant reading). To expand the variant reading for clarity: *there are people, who, because they are insubordinate, are [too] many* (i.e., *more than there should be*). This understanding of the variant is preferred, rather than that the troublemakers are *both* numerous and insubordinate.

²⁰ *Pastoral Epistles*, 396.

²¹ *Letter to Titus*, 98.

real historical issue, but the writer portrays it as one that comports with representations in other NT books.

Later in Titus, Paul did not transparently develop his ethical instruction on the vices identified in the quotation.²² He did, however, consistently address issues that undermined the Cretans' moral and spiritual reputation. The power brokers of the religious community and those sympathetic to their arguments questioned Cretan legitimacy, and troublemakers impressed a sense of religious and moral inferiority upon ethnic Cretans. Each time Paul mentioned Jewish religious and cultural interests he countered the notion that Gentiles could not be full-fledged members of the church without attending to certain traditions, circumcision (1:10) being chief among them.

The first words that require disambiguation appear in the quotative frame: *someone from [among] them—a prophet of their own—said* (εἶπέν τις ἐξ αὐτῶν ἴδιος αὐτῶν προφήτης, 1:12a). In this translation, I am trying to convey in English the sense that the speaker belonged to whatever group Paul had been talking about. The partitive genitive pronoun αὐτῶν, coupled with ἴδιος, emphasizes this belonging. Most commentators note the label *prophet* within the subject phrase as peculiar but few satisfyingly address the unusual syntactic construction. Mounce asserts that the repetition of αὐτῶν is classical.²³ Marshall says that the τις ἐξ αὐτῶν is “typically vague.”²⁴ In fact, it is difficult to translate the exact thrust into English. Although one can find a few constructions with some similarities among Greek literature, this syntax does not seem to constitute an established idiom; it is unusual. Under the rubric of Grice's maxim of manner—namely, *be brief*, Levinson explains why speakers might not adhere to the maxim. He reasons, “Wherever I avoid some simple expression in favour of some more complex paraphrase, it may be assumed that I do not do so wantonly, but because the details are somehow relevant to the present enterprise.”²⁵ The assumption is that non-conventional verbiage signals special meaning. Let us examine more closely the referential components of this quotative frame.

Because of its partitive use, let us address the first αὐτῶν and then return to the sequentially prior τις. This genitive plural pronoun in ἐξ αὐτῶν (*from [among] them*, 1:12) references a group or category of people that probably corresponds with οἵτινες

²² Although some scholars outline subtle correlates. See Kidd, “Titus as Apologia;” and Faber, ““Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons.””

²³ *Pastoral Epistles*, 399.

²⁴ *Critical and Exegetical*, 198.

²⁵ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 107–8. Note that relevance is essential to this explanation.

(*who[ever]*, 1:11), which itself refers to the troublemakers mentioned earlier (1:10). Paul mentions another plurality of persons further from the context of 1:12, in the previous paragraph (τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας, *the contradicting [people]*, 1:9). No other references to a group of people commend themselves as the target of αὐτῶν. In terms of literary context, πρεσβυτέρους (*elders*, 1:5) is distant and unlikely as a referent, because Paul shifts his focus from good leaders to bad in the paragraph that begins at 1:10.

Many commentators take the referent of this pronoun to be Cretans.²⁶ Although the *prima facie* reading assumes that Κρήτη (*Crete*, 1:5) signals the target, Paul's mention of this place is not only distant but primarily geographical. Hearers typically expect referents to correspond substantially with their pronouns on a conceptual level, and referentials normally correspond in kind (e.g., number, gender, conceptual type) with their referents.²⁷ As a singular proper name for Paul's former and Titus's current location (1:5), Paul probably did not expect readers to suspend the place name in their mind while he discussed other topics and people for a stretch of eight finite clauses (seven verses) before referring to the people who dwell in that place as αὐτῶν.

Cristea and Postolache provide a detailed technical outline of the factors affecting reference resolution.²⁸ Although Koine Greek is not one of the languages they account for in their investigation, they are making cross-linguistic claims about language cognition, so their findings have some applicability to biblical literature. Blass argues that Relevance-theoretical observations are valid cross-linguistically and that languages that differ on the surface level of forms do not differ as much on the cognitive level.²⁹ One of the factors Cristea and Postolache identify for successful reference resolution under "positional features" is "intervening discourse units."³⁰ They found "that the great majority of the anaphors can find an antecedent within this range," which they earlier identified as "a vicinity of five sentences."³¹ Resolving a referent farther away in the discourse typically

²⁶ E.g., Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 298–99.

²⁷ Incidentally, all of Smith's dozens of English and German examples follow this pattern. His examples, even of cataphora, reveal that when it functions, the referent is able to replace the cataphoric pronoun or noun with very little grammatical adjustment. See "Cataphoric Pronouns." One caveat with his study is that he was not examining all possible types of cataphors, but it suggests that similar rules are normal. Cristea and Postolache, in outlining the factors of referent resolution, note that grammatical equivalence can occasionally be a misleading indicator of resolution, so grammatical mismatches should not stand alone in dismissing a word or discourse unit as a referent. See "How to Deal," 21–24.

²⁸ "How to Deal," 21–25.

²⁹ *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 90.

³⁰ Cristea and Postolache, "How to Deal," 23.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

requires the referent to be remarkably salient, another factor in reference resolution that these and other authors mention. *Crete* just does not seem to stand out as salient in comparison to the racy intervening material between 1:5 and 1:12.

Conventional, *prima facie* readings of Titus 1:12 require unlikely syntactic maneuvers, taking the referent of ἀυτῶν (*of them*, 1:12²) to be either distant or cataphoric. On account of their linear (incremental) processing hypothesis, which does not need to be argued here, Cristea and Postolache, are dubious of all purportedly cataphoric usage. They suggest that when analysts suspect cataphoric usage, they should examine other referential alternatives before resolving a referring expression as such.³² This suggests that *Cretans* (1:12b) is most likely *not* the proper reference assignment for ἀυτῶν. A more appropriate antecedent is readily available in the preceding context, and its proximity as an anaphoric referent makes it far more likely. The relevant subset of people who dwell in Crete is the same referent as that of οἵτινες (*who[ever]*, 1:11). Therefore, ἀυτῶν probably refers to the troublemakers in the Cretan church.

If the personal pronoun (ἀυτῶν) refers to Cretans in general, this reference could not be coterminous with Cretans in any normal sense (e.g., ethnic, geographic, political). The pronoun could not refer to Cretan Christians, for none of the poets to whom the quotation is attributed lived during the Christian era. The context suggests a more straightforward reading. The troublemaking presumptive leaders—described as rebellious, idle-talking, deceptive, and especially from the circumcision (1:10)—are its most likely antecedent. Because Paul gives a relatively vivid description of that group, the idea that the pronoun refers to Cretans (either as a far-reaching anaphor or as an unusual cataphor) is doubtful. Paul was concerned with the tertiary discursive use of the possibly-famous refrain about Cretans, not its origins.

On the basis of natural language comprehension, a simple linear processing exercise should demonstrate how the tradition that the quotation is from Epimenides is superfluous to grasping Paul's use. After reading the book of Titus through to the quotative frame (1:12a), but not the quotation itself (1:12b), we may then ask simply on the basis of the text and not its history of interpretation, *What do we know about the speaker to which*

³² Ibid., 36–38. Their corpus analysis shows that there is usually some suggestion of the identity of referents within the few sentences prior to referring expressions. They address several complexities with referential language and, echoing other scholars, say, “In cases where a pronoun precedes a noun but the text contains an earlier more informative mention of the same entity, ... the pronoun should be resolved against the preceding text as in ordinary anaphora” (37). Titus 1:10–16 features this pattern.

Paul refers? Does Paul convey sympathy or trust toward this speaker? The analysis below continues our examination of referentials and suggests an answer.

The pronoun *τις* (*someone*, 1:12a) refers to a member of the group to which *αὐτῶν* refers. As I have shown, the group is not coterminous with ethnic Cretans or Cretan Christians generally, so a critical question is, *What is the whole and what is the part?* According to a typical iteration of the *prima facie* reading, the whole is ethnic Cretans and the part is a poet of Cretan descent—namely, Epimenides. This conventional reference assignment effectively excludes Jews, so we reasonably ask, *Whence this concern with circumcision (1:10) and Jewish myths (1:14)?* The intuitive natural language exercise described above casts these assumptions about the identity of the whole and of the part into doubt. A more natural reading is that *αὐτῶν* (used twice for intensity) is anaphoric and refers to the presumptive leaders. It was *from [among] them* (*ἐξ αὐτῶν*, 1:12a) that the quotation had re-emerged with a new and ugly pejorative purpose, and Paul became aware of its currency. He may not have known or cared about the original attribution of this quotation. What mattered was that the unidentified troublemaker (*τις*, 1:12a) who employed the ghastly slur was one of those who presumed to be leaders and teachers among the congregation. One of their tactics in advancing and maintaining their status was utterly objectionable to Paul—that of accentuating the supposed ethno-religious inferiority of the Cretan populace. The author portrayed Jew-Gentile relations as a significant issue in the Cretan church. I will discuss the themes of both church leadership and Jew-Gentile relations in Titus in Chapter Two under *Cognitive Environment*.

The indefinite pronoun *τις* (*someone*, 1:12) may be used to refer to someone whose identity is well-known in order to downplay the fame or importance of the individual—as in, “As *some* pop singer once said, ‘Beat it.’” The conventional reference assignment, however, assumes that Paul draws upon Epimenides as some sort of authority, which does not cohere with a choice to deliberately understate his importance. Therefore, I judge that this non-typical use of the indefinite pronoun does not apply in this case. Typically, *τις* is used when some feature of its referent (i.e., exact identity) is not known or not relevant. It is not clear that Paul knew the author of the quotation or its original poetic context. His use of *τις* corresponds to not being able to identify with certainty the person or persons who were using it. He may not have known the quotation outside its tertiary (an echo of an echo) and inappropriate context—the Cretan church.

To whom did Paul credit the saying? Whether or not Epimenides authored the quotation at some point in his vague career is not pertinent to Paul's use. He discloses no knowledge of or interest in Epimenides. The near context indicates that this τῆς was part of a troublesome group (1:10–12a). While natural language hearers process referential speech in real-time, modern readers must look again to the context, especially the preceding verses, for the most likely referent. Evidence from context strongly suggests that Paul was concerned with someone from among the group of troublemakers, regardless of whether this τῆς was echoing the words of someone who came before, such as Epimenides. Although many interpretations of Titus 1:12 depend upon assigning the quotation to this figure, pragmatic reference assignment does not commend the tendency.

Another word deserves attention—ἴδιος (*[their] own*, 1:12a). Grammatically and morphologically, this word is an adjective, but it almost always has a referential function.³³ Taking adjectival forms, it matches the inflection of its head noun, which frequently obscures the number and gender of its target, requiring pragmatic inference on the basis of context. This feature makes it a prime example of the underdeterminacy of linguistically-encoded speech. Every use of ἴδιος elsewhere in Titus is anaphoric, taking a referent from the preceding context (1:3; 2:5, 9). When this word appears in comparable NT epistolary literature to make reference to persons (as it does in 1:12; 2:5, 9), the use is also anaphoric.³⁴ When anaphoric, the referent typically appears in the immediate near context, never more than a few clauses away. Not only is ἴδιος typically anaphoric, its referent is typically explicit, yet *prima facie* readings require that the referent is implied and not explicit because no group or person that appears in the text is coterminous with what various iterations of the reading expect. This evidence, too, points to the troublemakers of 1:10–11 as the group from which the speaker of 1:12 comes.

³³ Based on its referential function, some classify it alongside pronouns. See Archibald T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 692; James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930), 298. Moulton and Milligan explain that grammarians who equate ἴδιος with the possessive pronoun are missing its often rich emphasis on belonging.

³⁴ The instance in the epistolary greeting (Titus 1:3) would only be an exception if the target of ἴδιος is taken to be λόγον and not ζῶης or ἐλπίδι or any other preceding word, which would be an odd reading. I have examined every use of ἴδιος in the PE (1 Tim 2:6, 3:4–5, 3:12, 4:2, 5:4, 5:8, 6:1, 6:15; 2 Tim 1:9, 4:3), the Pauline corpus (Rom 8:32, 10:3, 11:24, 14:4–5; Gal 2:2, 6:5, 6:9), and Hebrews (4:10, 7:27, 9:12, 13:12). These instances are exhaustive of every use within their respective books, which were chosen as representative. They demonstrate that cataphoric use is rare. In all of these examples, the referent appears in the preceding context. *Prima facie* readings require unusual (unlikely) syntactical maneuvers.

Finally, let us look at the immediate context following the Cretan quotation. The pronoun αὐτούς (*them*, 1:13c) refers to the direct object of a severe reproof. Paul issued the command to reprove (ἔλεγε αὐτοὺς ἀποτόμως, *rebuke them severely*, 1:13c) on the basis of (δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν, *on account of which reason*, 1:13b) the evidence he presented (ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη, *this testimony*, 1:13a). The near proximity of the claim that someone was advancing the insult suggests that the demonstrative here (αὕτη, *this*, 1:13a) refers to the testimony Paul gives concerning the troublemakers in Crete—namely, that they are propounding a characterization of ethnic Cretans inconsistent with the gospel and social reality. For this reason, Paul commands Titus to severely rebuke *them*—i.e., the troublemakers.

The *prima facie* reading typically assumes either that Paul was instructing Titus to rebuke Cretans generally or that his command to rebuke resumed his concern with the troublemakers, which he supposedly suspended in vv. 12–13a. Although the latter of these assumptions has the benefit of not being completely absurd, it ignores how connected the passage is by virtue of the density of referentials in vv. 12–13. The relative pronoun (ἣν, *which*, 1:13b) should not be separated from its referent to the extent this latter reading calls for. That is, the *reason* corresponds to the offenses Paul lists in 1:10–11, and the slur of 1:12 is one of the offenses. All of the offenses Paul lists constitute a single *testimony* or *reason* (μαρτυρία, αἰτίαν, 1:13) for rebuke. The quotation represents an egregious example. I describe evidence for this logic more under *Procedural and Logical Connectives and Particles* below. For now, let us consider *Deixis*.

2. *Deixis*

Deictics, also known as *indexicals*, serve a *pointing* function. They link words and sentences to other things—features of time, place, person, status, discourse, and so forth—without necessarily replacing them.³⁵ In his discussion of deixis, Levinson includes *discourse deixis* (a.k.a. *text deixis*), which is pertinent for interpreting Titus 1:10–16 and other biblical literature and for evaluating interpretations thereof. Discourse deixis points to a proximal or distal text or argument, linking components of the utterance to components of the broader discourse context.³⁶ It points to other speech, not to actual or imagined objects. The following example is adapted from Levinson: “That’s a rhinoceros;

³⁵ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 62–64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

spell it for me.”³⁷ The pronoun in the second clause does not refer to an animal in the world outside the discourse, but to the *mention* of the animal within the discourse. Mentions can become complex, because speakers may have in mind entire sentences, ideas, or ad hoc components of their speech. Speakers mention things to process, critique, or evaluate them. In the case above, the speaker asks the hearer to process (spell) *rhinoceros*. I detail the technical use of *mention* in RT later in this chapter.

This testimony is true (ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη ἐστὶν ἀληθής, 1:13) presents interpreters with a neglected question: *Does ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη point to the world outside or the world inside the discourse?* I have yet to see a commentator addressing this important concern. Marco Rocha has developed a set of rules for determining the target of demonstratives.³⁸ In his corpus analysis, the largest percentage of successful demonstrative referent resolutions was discourse deictic. In other words, to grasp the meaning of the demonstrative in most cases required *discourse knowledge* as opposed to any other strategy, such as collocation, “first-candidate search” (i.e., the closest prior noun), or “first-candidate chain” (i.e., preceding phrase or sentence).³⁹ *Prima facie* readings suggest that *this testimony* (1:13) refers to the quotation about Cretans—i.e., the preceding sentence. Some interpreters describe some nuance that Paul added. For instance, he winked at the logical contradiction inherent in the liar paradox that would obtain if a Cretan stated the quotation. Paul, tongue-in-cheek, affirms that it is true, thus deliberately creating a contradiction of his own. As Thiselton suggests, “The additional comment ‘This testimony is true’ is not a sign that the writer (or an editor) is oblivious to the nature of paradox; it is more likely to have been intended as a light touch underlining the absurdity of a regress *ad infinitum*.”⁴⁰ I have noted before, however, that this view depends upon the attribution of the quotation to Epimenides, which is at least unassured if not doubtful. Alternatively, if Paul was primarily concerned with troublemakers in the Cretan congregation who used the quotation as a slur against Titus’s missionary congregation, the demonstrative likely has a

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁸ See “Anaphoric Demonstratives: Dealing with the Hard Cases,” *AP* 263 (2005): 403–27. Rocha aimed for an extremely precise analysis, because he wanted to program computers to execute a repeatable process for analyzing text. He provides valuable insights, even though he does not entirely succeed. The problem is that most computerized linguistics projects tie analysis to form so that the system can compute all instances, which makes relevance theorists balk. Rocha worked with corpuses of English and Portuguese, and his analysis found similar patterns in both languages. He argues that his findings apply cross-linguistically and, therefore, reflect cognitive linguistics.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 409.

⁴⁰ “Logical Role,” 207.

discourse deictic function. It points to Paul's testimony against the troublemakers, not to his agreement with a prejudicial assessment of the Cretans. In Chapter Two under *Contextual Assumptions*, I explain the cognitive framing and activation of Paul's courtroom language.

The near demonstrative pronoun οὗτος (*this*, 1:13) was distinguished as the marker of proximity in classical Greek from ἐκεῖνος (*that*). By the era of the Greek NT, it might have lost some of its distinctive force in Koine so that it occasionally differed little from the personal pronoun αὐτός (*it*) in usage;⁴¹ but the NRSV translation, *That testimony is true* (1:13a), suggests an underlying *far* demonstrative. If one *assumes* that Paul is concerned with an ancient Cretan poet, then a far demonstrative would be appropriate, but the Greek does not lean in such a direction. If Paul is pointing, however, to his own exposure of a problem in his case against the troublemakers, then the near demonstrative that we find in the passage is fitting. The author of Titus knows how to use both οὗτος (*this*, 1:13) and ἐκεῖνος (*that*, 3:7) distinctively, so it is reasonable to argue that they should be differentiated.

The author of 2 Timothy clearly knew how to distinguish between near and far demonstratives in discourse deixis, pointing to referents in the near discourse as οὗτοι (*these [ones]*, 2 Tim 3:8) and the far discourse as ἐκείνων (*those [ones]*, 3:9) to distinguish between οἱ ἐνδύοντες (*the ones slyly entering*, 3:6) and Ἰάννης καὶ Ἰαμβρῆς (*Jannes and Jambres*, 3:8), respectively. To avoid confusion while skipping over another demonstrative to reach the target, the writer chose the far demonstrative in the second instance. This suggests that the near demonstrative in Titus 1:13 retains its proximity-marking force. The proposal that the same author wrote each PE reinforces this claim.

If ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη (*this testimony*, 1:13a) points to a saying that had currency in the Cretan church and that Paul was affirming, then it depends upon a truth-conditional proposition. Inquiries into historical (opinions about) Cretan malfeasance would, then, be understandable. Given that Paul identified the subject of the predicate adjective *true* as a *testimony*, we reasonably ask, *In what sense could the poetic saying be categorized as a testimony?*⁴² This question deserves attention. But, evidence suggests that Paul pointed to his own description of the troublemakers' malfeasance in Crete as a *testimony* that

⁴¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 318.

⁴² In Chapter Two under *Contextual Assumptions*, I explain the effect of activating a courtroom. It suffices here to note that αἰτία can mean "a basis for legal action," which fits Paul's use. See entry in BDAG, 31.

prosecuted their demeaning speech (1:12) and disrupting behavior (1:10–11). The deixis likely targets Paul’s own discourse, rather than some truth-conditional content in the outside world for which modern scholars should feel obliged to find corroborating evidence.

Social deixis is also relevant for interpreting the Bible. It involves aspects of language that encode the social identities of participants or the social relationship between each other or other persons referred to.⁴³ Writers, as well as speakers, regularly choose their words based on their propriety both to describe real-world objects (semantic appropriateness) and to describe them properly to specific hearers (social appropriateness). In languages with honorific systems and formalities, Levinson notes, “it is almost impossible to say anything at all which is not sociolinguistically marked as appropriate for certain kinds of addressees only.”⁴⁴ Native speakers of any language (including English) are usually not conscious of the extent to which social deixis affects their seemingly intuitive choices of lexeme and syntax.

For example, consider how the following list of congratulatory phrases reflects various levels and registers of celebration as well as types of relationship between the speaker and the hearer: *I’m proud of you; I applaud you; I admire you; Yay!* Each statement is appropriate to the same occasion but evokes different social arrangements. They may exhibit semantic differences, but their pragmatic differences are more significant.⁴⁵ Levinson explains, “Social deixis is concerned with the grammaticalization, or encoding in language structure, of social information.”⁴⁶ Social deixis signals social roles such as differentiations between first, second, and third persons and the social categories among them as well as indications and invocations of privilege, deference or disdain. Levinson observes that almost any utterance has social deictic features.

The Cretan quotation may have evoked a liar paradox in its original setting, and Paul may deliberately accentuate the logical contradiction involved.⁴⁷ I follow Thiselton, however, in considering the contradiction to be even more dramatic and effective if it

⁴³ Definition based closely on Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 89.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁵ Social deixis also relates to material in Chapter Three—The Non-Propositional Dimensions of Communication.

⁴⁶ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 93.

⁴⁷ Although we cannot recover it completely, the quotation was likely not a general statement about Cretans in its original context. It was within the context of pious pagan poetry, and the broad accusation emerged from one offense. The lie that started it all seems to have been that Zeus (the Cretan man by that name) was dead—actually true in that limited sense. Cretans, in fact, were not considered, in general, to be liars.

exposes the failure of third parties (i.e., the presumptive leaders) to speak anything objectively true by taking up this quotation as a slur.⁴⁸ According to the *prima facie* reading, part of the validity structure for Paul is that the quotation emerges from within the Cretan community (i.e., first-person reference), but it can only be true if it is used from without (i.e., third-person reference). The troublemakers, rather than Paul, leaned on this validity structure, whereas Paul exposed the absurdity of the quotation in their mouths by pointing to their dubious logic—they relied on a lie to tell what they purported to be a truth.

Paul's self-designation is an example of social deixis. He referred to himself as *a servant of God, an apostle, moreover, of Jesus Christ* (1:1). Thus, he introduced the letter by signalling aspects of his vocation in relation to God and, implicitly, Titus and the church. He set himself as an authority representing the *unlying God* (1:2). So, when he sanctions Titus to execute certain authoritative actions (e.g., *appoint* 1:5; *rebuke* 1:13), he invokes multiple layers of social obligation—for instance, when he says, *I desire you to insist on these [things]* (3:8).

Did Paul use the honorable title prophet (προφήτης, 1:12) to refer to a pagan poet, Epimenides? As far as Acts 17:28 is concerned, Paul knew how to say *poet* when referring to a pagan author.⁴⁹ If Paul agreed with the quotation and wanted to elevate the status of its originator, he might have done so by naming him a *prophet*. His usage, however, seems to suggest special *marking* which is often signaled by non-customary usage.⁵⁰ Towner thinks that Paul's use of this inappropriate, honorific title is likely sarcastic.⁵¹ It had distinct

⁴⁸ See Thiselton, "Logical Role," 207–23. He develops his interpretation from arguments of linguists J.L. Austin, J.R. Searle, and others (esp. 218–221). As I have suggested, his is one of the best and most nuanced treatments of this passage in history. His great contribution was in calling people's attention to the gross mistreatment of this passage on the basis of flawed historical inquiry. In the end, however, his conclusion does not convince me, because it requires a specific and fragile set of contextual assumptions (implicated premises, to be exact; see my Chapter Two) that I do not think it is reasonable to expect. I think my final interpretation is more plausible.

⁴⁹ Craig S. Keener incidentally suggests that Epimenides was also a possible source for a phrase of Paul's poetic quotation in Acts 17:28, which may have actually been an amalgam (note the plural source, *poets*). Because none of Epimenides's works survive extant, this can only be conjecture. Keener's footnotes show the second-hand nature of these attributional claims. Some excess references fail to corroborate the attribution of the Acts quotation to Epimenides but are merely ancient literary mentions of Epimenides. I discuss the scholarly confusion about exactly who Epimenides was and when he lived in the Introduction, where I note every one of the references Keener cites (*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 3, 4 vols. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 2657).

⁵⁰ See Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 61–68; Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 307–8.

⁵¹ *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 700, 742.

significance in a Jewish ethno-religious context; as Quinn notes, “Prophetic credentials were found and valued among the Jewish Christians.”⁵² A descriptive use would have flattened its significance. After describing the troublemakers (1:10–11), Paul downplayed the speaker’s importance (*someone from among them*) then upplayed the speaker’s credentials (*prophet*). This is a standard tactic in irony, as when friends observe someone’s ridiculous behavior and remark, “What a genius.”⁵³

Paul subverted the normal meaning of the descriptor by pointing snidely to a presumptive leader who only posed as a prophet in the scenario recounted in Titus 1:10–12. Only in the crooked company of the troublemakers, and perhaps in his own mind, was the speaker of this quotation considered a prophet. To have such a prophet as this—now that Paul has exposed him—is a source of shame. Suwon Yoon explains how honorific titles can be deployed subversively to achieve dramatic pragmatic effects.⁵⁴ In the case of Titus 1:12, *prophet* is actually not an honorific title but a sarcastic dismissal. Now that I have proposed resolutions to critical referential and deictic language in Titus 1:12 and its context, let us examine the connective strategies in the passage from a pragmatic perspective.

Procedural and Logical Connectives and Particles

Titus 1:12 and its context have discursive features that require inferential processing, and the discipline of *Discourse Analysis* (DA) can be especially helpful for discerning the logical connections between sentences and discourse units *as encoded* in language. Linguist Robert E. Longacre developed one of the earliest methods of DA applied to the Hebrew Bible. He used it to analyze the stable, discourse functions of words and phrases and considered objectivity and reliability to be important strengths of the method. It straddles the domains of semantics and pragmatics, stripping formal components of language of numerous erroneous semantic accretions while asserting their stable

⁵² *Letter to Titus*, 109.

⁵³ See, e.g., Wilson, “Pragmatic of Verbal Irony;” Francisco Yus, “Relevance Theory and Contextual Sources-Centered Analysis of Irony: Current Research and Compatibility,” in *Relevance Theory: Recent Developments, Current Challenges, and Future Directions*, ed. Manuel Padilla Cruz (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2016), 147–71; Seto, “On Non-Echoic Irony.” I explain irony in more detail in the second half of this chapter.

⁵⁴ “Semantic Constraint and Pragmatic Nonconformity for Expressives: Compatibility Condition on Slurs, Epithets, Anti-Honorifics, Intensifiers, and Mitigators,” *Lang.Sci.* 52 (2015): 46–69.

functional core.⁵⁵ Because it is now practiced by a broad array of interpreters and linguists, it exhibits diversity in method, philosophy, and level of precision.

Outlining two broad trends within DA will reveal its relation to RT: One broad grouping of discourse analysts emphasize formal and code-driven phenomena, ameliorating some of the subjective tendencies of interpretation. So, it is about decoding what an author has encoded by observed patterns of cohesion, coherence, and development. The attraction of DA for these interpreters is its presumed objectivity since it is based on disinterested verifiable textual data rather than on impassioned, rhetorical readings. For example, Runge claims that each Greek connective “brings to bear a unique *semantic* constraint to the relationship of the clause that follows with some other portion of the discourse.”⁵⁶

The other grouping of analysts emphasize that the patterns they observe do not place semantic constraints upon utterances as much as trigger pragmatic inferences. For example, Mira Ariel writes, “Hence, we cannot simply argue for or against specific semantic analyses based on prevalent discourse patterns, for the correct account for the pattern may be pragmatic, rather than semantic”⁵⁷ Along these lines, Blass explains, “Discourse is not a purely linguistic notion, and can therefore not be investigated in purely formal linguistic terms.”⁵⁸

This breadth of opinion and method is actually illuminating. Linguists such as Runge and Blass, representing different perspectives on the role of DA, provide nuanced discussions of how formal components of language affect discourse interpretation. Analysts from the semantic maximalist strain emphasize stable encoding, whereas analysts from the pragmaticist strain emphasize flexibility and context-dependence. These emphases parallel the dialectic that RT holds to be essential to comprehension. DA complements RT in that it demonstrates the linguistic encoding of some pragmatic functions while also appreciating the influence of context. The meaning of ἀλλά, for example, is not contained in an English word that glosses it, such as *but* or *rather*. Instead,

⁵⁵ Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, Second Ed., Topics in Language and Linguistics (New York: Plenum, 1996).

⁵⁶ See, Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 51 (my emphasis). See also *ibid.*, 19. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts regard the objectivity of DA as an asset in finding ways to locate Variant-Unit Boundaries for text criticism. See *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 80–86.

⁵⁷ “What Discourse Can(Not) Teach Us,” *Int.Rev.Prag.* 6 (2014): 181–210. See also Blass, *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 7–42.

⁵⁸ Blass, *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 41.

ἀλλά pragmatically signals a context in which an audience is to expect the correction of an inadequate or incomplete view—namely, the view that the speaker articulates in the immediately preceding clause.⁵⁹ So, the pragmatic and semantic features of language combine.

Consider the extended ἵνα purpose clause contained in Titus 1:13–14. The intention of the stern rebuke (1:13) is to remove attention away from *Jewish myths and commandments of men who are turning from the truth* (1:14). These diversions, however, are not clearly related to the content of the quotation. *Do such myths and commandments cause generalized moral failure?* The substance of the quotation cannot be the reason for the rebuke. Addressing gluttony or laziness, for instance, would not accomplish the ends described above in any transparent way. If the church in Crete was exercising excessive austerity (e.g., fasting) under the influence of *Jewish myths and commandments of men*, as some commentators hold,⁶⁰ it is difficult to understand how rebuking them for *gluttony* will solve the problem. If, however, Paul wanted Titus to rebuke the presumptive leaders for advancing a degraded view of Cretans, then one of the results of rebuking them could be that they cease teaching their corrupt doctrine which involved *Jewish myths* (of ethno-religious superiority). These presumptive leaders were the *men who are turning from the truth* (1:14), not the Cretans in general. Although they were in the church, their doctrine and social concourse did not agree with Paul's. If Titus was supposed to rebuke Cretans for general and intrinsic moral failure, it would not transparently lead away from paying attention to these *myths and commandments*. The instrumental connection that Paul envisaged between the imperative and its stated purpose would be extremely weak.

Consider also Paul's use of ἀλλά in 1:15. Greek writers typically use this conjunction to correlate two ideas while making a *correction* or *completion* in the second clause (the one beginning with ἀλλά) and usually keeping the principle claim from the first clause intact.⁶¹ Titus 1:15 may be translated as follows: *to the clean [ones], all things [are] clean; while to the defiled and faithless ones, not one thing [is] clean; instead, both their thinking and conscience [are] defiled* (πάντα καθαρὰ τοῖς καθαροῖς· τοῖς δὲ μεμιαμμένοις καὶ ἀπίστοις οὐδὲν καθαρὸν, ἀλλὰ μεμΐανται αὐτῶν καὶ ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ συνείδησις). While leaving the principle claim intact that *not one thing [being] clean* pertains to persons who

⁵⁹ Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 55–57.

⁶⁰ E.g., Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*, 80; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 127, 132, 145; Bassler, *1 Timothy*, 27–28; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 402; Twomey, *Pastoral Epistles*, 224.

⁶¹ Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 55–57.

have been defiled and are unfaithful, the ἄλλὰ clause completes this idea by explaining why. It is crucial, therefore, to understand whom Paul is referring to as *clean [ones]*, *unclean [ones]*, and related designations. The play on words suggests a religio-cultural conflict. Paul places the very people who advance Cretan unworthiness on the wrong side of this poignant comparison, drawing as it does upon religious connotations salient for Jews.

Let us consider two conjunctions (δέ and γάρ) side-by-side for reasons that will soon become apparent. The coordinating conjunction δέ is part of the connecting tissue of Titus, appearing in the letter relatively frequently; and, although it has a range of possible nuances, it nevertheless advances the logic of an argument in consistent ways. The conjunction marks development and comparison (with contrast, when appropriate) between concepts. In vernacular terms, δέ basically indicates that not enough has been said, so it signals *I must add something more* and could be paraphrased *what's more...* The need to say more is not so much a logical necessity as an authorial compulsion; in order to satisfy the communicative intention, the author must add what follows the δέ.

The logical conjunction γάρ is used to strengthen or confirm a previous proposition. Although it can, in context, have a causal force, that force derives from the nature of the material introduced by γάρ, not by the semantics of the conjunction itself. According to Runge, γάρ “adds background information that strengthens or supports what precedes.”⁶² The notion of *background information* is critical in DA, because one of the discipline’s key insights is that authors place things in the background as a means of accentuating and enriching the *focus* (i.e., what summons audience attention). Typically, γάρ marks these logical relationships between major components of an argument at the sentence level. When γάρ marks a causal relationship, component *A* (the first unit) is the effect, and component *B* (the clause or paragraph containing the conjunction) is the cause. Some Greek authors tended to use γάρ at the more macro level for major argument components, and some deployed γάρ so frequently that demarcating argument components becomes difficult.⁶³ Titus exhibits the former of these two usage tendencies.

Although δέ does not appear in Titus 1:12 according to the NA²⁸ accepted text, it does appear there in fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus (original hand). The quotative frame therein builds upon verse 11, adding δέ, and may be translated, *moreover, someone from*

⁶² Ibid., 52.

⁶³ Runge describes uses of this conjunction in line with my description here (ibid., 51–54).

them—a prophet of theirs—said (1:12a).⁶⁴ This same variant appears in ninth-century codices F and G, eleventh-century codex 81, and a few other minor witnesses. Although Sinaiticus is a significant witness, the total evidence for this variant is not strong, and the preferred reading (without δέ) is probably original. Nevertheless, this variant suggests that early interpreters saw continuity and development between Titus 1:11 and 1:12, rather than divergence. Twelfth-century codex 103 inserts γάρ in the place where δέ appears in these others. This variant may have been an interpretive move and suggests that the scribe saw continuity between the verses and logical support for 1:11 in 1:12. That is, *someone speaking* (εἶπέν τις 1:12) the quotation coincides with *disrupting households* and *teaching what they ought not* (1:11).

Greek authors often abutted sentences without explicit connectives. This *asyndeton* can also be a conjunctive strategy. Runge explains that asyndeton—“linking clauses without the use of a conjunction”—is the default means of conjoining clauses in *Koine* Greek.⁶⁵ By *default*, he does not mean the most common but the most unmarked. Writers often used it when the connection between clauses is obvious on the basis of context, not primarily when they change topics. The clauses that meet between Titus 1:11 and 1:12, according to the favored NA²⁸ reading, do not feature an explicit conjunction. *What could this asyndeton mean?* Wilson and Sperber write, “A conjoined utterance is presented as a unit, encouraging the hearer to process the two utterances jointly and in parallel, looking for implications derivable from both.”⁶⁶ The author chooses not to make the linkage explicit but to allow the context of the conjoined clauses to signal their relationship because, as Runge puts it, “the writer judges that the implicit relation between the clauses is sufficiently clear.”⁶⁷

A sentence tends to follow one of two broad logical-semantic directions after asyndeton: first, the sentence could break with the previous material, typically forming a new paragraph; second, it could develop the previous material through an implicit logical relationship, exhibiting more or less continuity. When authors take the second direction,

⁶⁴ For high-quality photographic scans of the original manuscript, see British Library, London, “Codex Sinaiticus,” <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=49&lid=en&side=r&zoomSlider=0#49-1-12-2> (accessed 5/28/18).

⁶⁵ *Discourse Grammar*, 20–21.

⁶⁶ Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber, “Pragmatics and Time,” *RTAI* (1998): 1–22 at 19. Wilson and Sperber also point to Diane Blakemore, *Semantic Constraints on Relevance* (New York: Blackwell, 1987). She suggests the same effect of conjoined pairs, namely, that both are required for a full interpretation. The second-order processing requires greater effort, but it yields greater cognitive effects.

⁶⁷ Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 20.

the implicit relationship tends to be one of particularization.⁶⁸ As I have shown, Titus 1:12–14, especially the referential material, builds and depends upon 1:10–11. The asyndeton does not signal a level of discontinuity that constitutes a break. Rather, the quotation with its frame logically develops Paul’s description of the troublemakers. Specifically, 1:12 presents a particular example of their behavior, so the relationship between the major clauses that abut at the juncture of verses 11 and 12 seems to be one of particularization.⁶⁹ That is, uttering the insult is a specific example of the troublemakers’ behavior that had been resulting in *upsetting entire households* (1:11b) and that should be addressed by the implicit injunction [*someone*] *ought to silence [them]* (οὐς δεῖ ἐπιστομίζειν 1:11a).⁷⁰ Therefore, Paul’s use of the Cretan quotation had a primarily argumentative function rather than a descriptive function. He was not interested in describing the Cretans but was both exposing an incriminating example of leadership malpractice and rendering a verdict with damages (to echo Paul’s courtroom imagery).⁷¹

This common use of asyndeton as a move from general to particular with essential continuity between clauses is exhibited in several more specific logical-semantic relationships. Stephen H. Levinsohn lists other common relationships that correlate to asyndeton: “orienter-content,... generic-specific,... conclusion-grounds;” all of which would comport with the interpretation I have been suggesting.⁷²

Wilson and Sperber offer a helpful way to understand the pragmatic effect of conjoined clauses without an explicit conjunction. They say that the speaker sometimes raises a question in the first part of the utterance that she answers in the second part. *What question does Titus 1:10–11 raise, and how does 1:12 answer it?* Because Paul portrayed the troublemakers and the fruit of their work in such general terms in 1:10–11, the question of what exactly they were teaching and how exactly they were upsetting households remains until 1:12. It seems natural, then, that he would answer the question with an example of their most egregious or representative offense. Thus, he frames and echoes the

⁶⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Literally, *whom [someone] ought to silence or gag* (although this second gloss is likely more belligerent than fitting).

⁷¹ Discussed in Chapter Two under *Cognitive Environment*.

⁷² *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 122. I have not reproduced Levinsohn’s peculiar formatting in this quotation.

quotation that exemplifies the troublemakers' whole attitude toward the Cretan people, not least of all those in the congregation.

Observing the asyndeton between 1:12 and 1:13 is also a starting point for grasping the relationship between the quotation and its frame and the consequences Paul begins to outline.⁷³ The referential and deictic features that I have outlined above suggest a significant level of continuity, not a change in topic; but, by using asyndeton, Paul does not explicate the kind of relationship these verses have to each other. Hearers must infer it from context. Given its deictic reference, *this testimony is true* (1:13a) is most likely an explanatory comment upon verse 12. It explains the entire verse; the Cretan quotation itself is merely an embedded clause within the sentence. A consequential imperative tightly follows this comment—*for which reason, rebuke them severely* (1:13b). We may infer, then, that the relationship between verses 12 and 13 is one of explanation with hortatory causation. So, Paul instructs Titus to rebuke the presumptive leaders severely because of the trouble they are causing stemming from attitudes exemplified by the quotation. Let us now consider a third and final basic pragmatic process—disambiguation on the basis of *lexical pragmatics*.

Lexical Pragmatics

Individual word meaning depends upon its usage in context. This context includes the entire communicative environment—both spoken words *and* social circumstances.⁷⁴ *Lexical pragmatics* is the area of RT that deals with questions of word meaning. I explore two basic concepts regarding lexical pragmatics that have particular bearing upon the interpretation of Titus 1:12—*literalness versus figurativeness* and *words as ad hoc concepts*.

Whereas *lexical semantics* concerns the intrinsic and stable meanings of words, *lexical pragmatics* concerns the meaning of words as they appear in particular utterances in natural language.⁷⁵ Clark explains that, upon hearing a word, an audience accesses three kinds of conceptual information: 1) lexical information, which includes the technical

⁷³ I only address instances of asyndeton that appear immediately before and after the Cretan quotation. Runge judges that asyndeton is the default approach for conjoining clauses in NT epistolary and speech material, so it is not surprising to see several more instances in Titus. See *Discourse Grammar*, 17–26, esp. 20–23.

⁷⁴ See Gene L. Green, “Lexical Pragmatics and the Lexicon,” *BBR* 22 (2012): 315–33; Patricia Kolaiti and Deirdre Wilson, “Corpus Analysis and Lexical Pragmatics: An Overview,” *Int.Rev.Prag.* 6 (2014): 211–39.

⁷⁵ Lexical semantics is not confined to dictionaries, but lexicographers endeavor to incorporate as much semantic content as forms convey, even though they can never quite accomplish this goal. The same holds for grammars and grammarians as they attempt to account for various uses and combinations of words.

specifications of a word, word type, where the word fits into a language, and so forth; 2) logical information, such as what concepts the word contributes to the sentence and the role (including grammatical) of the word in the sentence; and 3) encyclopedic information that comes from an individual's understanding and associations involving that word and the real world. Every human being has a different set of encyclopedic information to access, and the senses of words differ in both degree and quality, so the variations of meaning for a given word are virtually innumerable.⁷⁶ In order to understand a speaker's intended meaning, a hearer engages in a quest for cognitive effects. Relevance theorists refer to this process as *mutual adjustment and enrichment*. Upon hearing the encoded form, hearers engage in a dialectic (*mutual*) process and *adjust* their assumptions based on the level of cognitive effects that they derive from a particular meaning (*enrichment*).⁷⁷ Therefore, the process is not completely open-ended but is "constrained by the principle of relevance," like a gravitational pull toward the speaker's intended meaning.⁷⁸ With this basic understanding of lexical pragmatics, let us consider how hearers discern where words fall on the *literal-figurative continuum*.

1. The Literal-Figurative Continuum

The service representative on the telephone says, *We'll be there in no time*. She does not intend her hearer to take this common statement literally. Relevance theorists do not hold, as Grice did at first, that literalness is the default mode of speech.⁷⁹ Clark explains,

Relevance theorists have always assumed what is sometimes called "the continuity hypothesis" on which loose, hyperbolic, and metaphorical utterances are not different in kind or processed in significantly different ways from literal utterances. On this view, literalness is a matter of degree, and utterances may be more or less literal. Full literalness is not the norm but an exception at one end of the range of possibilities.⁸⁰

Literalness or figurativeness can have humorous, ironic, sarcastic, and other connotations when extended to the wrong end of the spectrum. Patricia Kolaiti and Deirdre Wilson explain, "There is no clear cut-off point between literal use, approximation, hyperbole and metaphor, but merely a continuum."⁸¹ So, a more appropriate question to ask than *whether*

⁷⁶ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 244–52.

⁷⁷ This process will be developed further in Chapter Two under *Contextual Assumptions* and *Implicated Premises*.

⁷⁸ Green, "Lexical Pragmatics and the Lexicon," 325. Clark details this process in *Relevance Theory*, 240–52.

⁷⁹ See Kolaiti and Wilson, "Corpus Analysis," 219–21; Garmendia, "A (Neo)Gricean Account," 42; Sperber and Wilson, "Pragmatics" (2007), 485–90.

⁸⁰ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 251.

⁸¹ "Corpus Analysis," 222.

a writer's words are literal or figurative is *What kind or degree of literalness or figurativeness does the writer exhibit here?*

Although Relevance theorists have since updated Grice's concepts, his analysis of non-literal speech can be helpful to biblical interpreters. According to Grice's intuitions, when someone hears a sentence that obviously does not conform to the *maxim of quality*—that is, a sentence that is false, strictly speaking—he does not dismiss it as senseless. Instead, he gets to work at understanding what the speaker could mean in an alternative, non-literal sense that she conveys by “flout[ing] the maxim.”⁸² Relevance theorists raise two main objections to Grice's original intuitions about non-literal speech: first, he assumed literal speech to be the default mode for natural language; second, he assumed a two-step process for comprehension.⁸³ Relevance theorists prefer a more direct explanation for non-literal communication. This preference corresponds to the aim of *explaining* the functional success of natural language rather than *prescribing* a method of interpretation. The speed with which hearers typically intuit figurative use necessitates a real-time model that corresponds to the rapidity of actual language comprehension.⁸⁴ Grice's procedure, nevertheless, may be conceptually useful, because it divides interpretation into logically discrete steps.⁸⁵ Relevance theorists would not expect an original audience to engage in such an effort-intensive process, but modern interpreters of the Bible have little choice. Grice correctly reasoned that statements that are untrue from a literal standpoint are not thereby considered meaningless or false; hearers engage in a process for interpreting their non-literal meaning. His two-step process for interpreting utterances—finding the literal meaning and then canceling it and considering others—has its shortcomings, but it helps interpreters to appreciate the reasoning behind a relevance-guided hermeneutic.

Consider again Paul's use of the word *prophet* (προφήτης, 1:12). We do not have access to the writer's tone of voice, but evidence we do have suggests that Paul used *prophet* not only non-literally but ironically. Expectations of poetic style and divine inspiration are often commensurate with being labelled a *prophet* in the NT, even when the

⁸² Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” 53–54. Garmendia explains, defends, and corrects Grice's account of non-literal speech, specifically his treatment of irony. See “A (Neo)Gricean Account,” 42, 58, *et passim*.

⁸³ Furlong explains that Grice assuming literalness to be the default mode of speech derives from Aristotle and classical approaches to literature and language. In this sense, Grice's conception of language was antiquated even as he blazed new trails with his linguistic theories. See her “Relevance Theory,” 7–8.

⁸⁴ I discuss this issue in Chapter Three under *The Economy of Cognitive Effects*.

⁸⁵ Grice provides an explanation of his basic scheme for understanding not-literal speech in “Logic and Conversation,” 46–49.

label is misapplied. Paul, however, was not referencing Israel's classic prophets whose written works were featured in the canon of Jewish Scripture, and he was not referencing NT-era contemporaries in the church who exercised corresponding gifts of inspired speech (cf. *prophet* in 1 Cor 12:28–29; 14:29, 32, 37–38; Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; 2 Pet 2:16).

Conventional readings of Titus 1:12 assume that he was using the word in a unique and more generic sense: *a person with the capacity to speak a poignant truth that defies or surpasses the wisdom, knowledge, or convention of the culture of which he or she is a part*. Certainly, Paul could draw on non-Jewish and non-Christian authorities to vouch for a teaching that he wished to advance, but *Why do interpreters think that Paul was doing so in Titus 1:12?* I suspect that its history of interpretation influences this assumption.⁸⁶

The common view that Paul deliberately vested the originator of the quotation with authority by labelling him a *prophet* is doubtful. First, it presumes the attribution of the quotation to a Cretan, Epimenides—a dubious assumption on literary-historical and grammatical grounds. Second, it requires that Paul advanced the substance of the Cretan quotation *in toto*, which has the problematic socio-historical implications and literary-canonical contradictions I outlined in my Introduction. Third, it assumes a topical break within the paragraph that is unsustainable on the basis of connective, referential, and deictic language throughout the context. Fourth, nothing else in the context suggests that Paul views the speaker, whom he refers to using the indefinite pronoun *τις* (*someone*, 1:12), to be a trustworthy source. Fifth, Paul's theological and moral concerns in the rest of the book do not find expression in the quotation itself, whereas reporting the quotation as an example of the disruptive behaviors of a *Judaizing* contingent in the church does correspond to concerns he consistently raised in Titus.

A pragmatic sense for *prophet*, derived ironically from the literal senses above, would have had special significance for a target with a Jewish background. The speaker is immersed in a cohort of presumptive leaders *within* the church. Rather than achieving the title of *prophet* honorably, however, he wears it illegitimately. Paul ridiculed the untrustworthy, self-appointed and self-satisfied speaker by calling him a *prophet*

⁸⁶ Other NT epistolary literature reveals that referring to someone as *prophet* was not necessarily positive. The Apostle Paul acknowledged that not all who are seen or who see themselves as prophets should be recognized as such, especially when their speech results in disruption (1 Cor 14:37–38). Furthermore, calling a person a prophet is not automatically an endorsement (2 Pet 2:16).

ironically.⁸⁷ Negative implications carry over to any wheedling, head-nodding, self-approved troublemakers who endorse such slurs. The redundant third-person pronouns coupled with the marked syntax of the quotative frame serves to distance the speaker from Paul and convey that this *prophet* is not so much *one of ours* as *one of theirs*. He is a *prophet*, but *to them* (i.e., the troublemakers) not *to us* (i.e., Paul, Titus, and the church).

2. *Words as Ad Hoc Concepts*

Without denying that words inherently contain some semantic information, Sperber and Wilson argue that every instance of a word differs from every other instance of that same word. Humans create an *ad hoc concept* every time they perceive an object or infer the meaning of a semantic representation.⁸⁸ Clark explains this lexical pragmatic doctrine: “Pragmatic processes create ‘*ad hoc*’ concepts, derived by modifying the encoded concepts in order to find interpretations which satisfy their [hearers’] expectations of relevance.”⁸⁹ This involves concept *broadening* and *narrowing*. Theorists understand that virtually every concept or every word that encodes a concept has some flexibility or looseness and needs adjustment within the context of the utterance. For example, to say *Thelma is a princess* involves understanding that Thelma exhibits some qualities of a princess and that not all princesses possess every pertinent quality. Thus, broadening and loosening frequently occur at the same time.

A technical definition of *flat* might be *consisting of all points on a plane without interruption or omission*. To say *Kansas is flat* means that one understands *flat* to include things that are not completely flat. Clark points out that the concept encoded by the word *flat* is not something that anyone actually experiences in the world, so every time we use that word we are adjusting the concept.⁹⁰ Therefore, Kansas can be *flat*; and a person’s haircut can be a *flattop*; and a tire, although primarily round, can be *flat* when it loses air pressure so that its downward edge is more *flat* than it ought to be.

Other concepts or words have equally strict definitions but are derived on historical, cultural, or other bases, rather than scientific or mathematical. As Green observes, “Ad hoc concept formation occurs on every page of the biblical text.”⁹¹ Some

⁸⁷ I explain other features of irony evident in Paul’s use of *prophet* as well as why I refer to the troublemakers as *presumptive leaders* in Chapter Two under *Contextual Assumptions*.

⁸⁸ Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (2007), 485–90.

⁸⁹ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 252 (quotation marks with italics original).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 248; I expand upon his discussion of *flat*.

⁹¹ “Lexical Pragmatics and the Lexicon,” 323.

critical words in Titus derive their meaning on the basis of legal or religious practice, such as *prophet* (1:12), *testimony* and *accusation* (1:13), *clean* and *defiled* (1:15).

According to the lexical-pragmatic analysis of Kolaiti and Wilson, hearers furnish sufficient inferences to understand what meanings speakers intend. Kolaiti and Wilson argue that differences between the lexical-semantic assumptions that one hearer holds versus another do not present obstacles to comprehension; because speakers presumably provide sufficient information to disambiguate, narrow, and specify what they mean.⁹² In instances of effective communication, hearers bring contextual assumptions that maximize their perception of relevance.⁹³ So, a speaker can draw an idea from “left field,” while the listener understands the “heart” of the matter. *Why?* Because, in acts of communication, as opposed to mere verbal exercises or non-communicative sonic acts, both parties are interested enough in accomplishing a shared meaning that they cooperate in their respective processes.⁹⁴

The word *prophet*, as a survey of its uses demonstrates, is flexible and must be understood in its specific context. Kolaiti and Wilson conclude “that lexical narrowing and broadening are highly flexible and context-dependent processes which can combine in the interpretation of a single word, and support the view that there is a continuum of cases between literal, approximate, hyperbolic and metaphorical use.”⁹⁵ Distance in time, space, language, and culture separates modern interpreters from first-century Christians, and our respective signaling systems are not entirely compatible. Because what was intuitive for them is not intuitive for us, our task is to listen for the clues that help to disambiguate the concept *prophet*. Our knowledge of the ancient world and of the basic linguistically-encoded meaning of words is only a starting point. *Prophet* activated something for Paul’s

⁹² Kolaiti and Wilson, “Corpus Analysis,” 228–9. *Presumably* means *in an effective act of communication*. Writers may fail at their part of the communicative enterprise, rendering the recovery of authorial intention abortive. But, this happens with specific instances of attempted communication, not with language in general. Therefore, we proceed under the assumption that Paul provided sufficient clues to disambiguate his meaning.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁹⁴ Hence, Grice’s *Cooperative Principle*. See “Logic and Conversation,” 45.

⁹⁵ “Corpus Analysis,” 234. They also offer a disclaimer about “The pragmatic intuitions we have relied on in analysing our corpus data.” It reflects why the conclusions of biblical scholars can be both confident but also tentative: “On the one hand, these intuitions are about actual utterances, produced in actual situations. On the other hand, those utterances were not addressed to us, which puts us in the position of overhearers rather than actual addressees. As a result, the pragmatic intuitions they give rise to are still to some extent about hypothetical pragmatic facts, and are open to error or influence by our prior theoretical commitments. This seems to be an unavoidable feature of the use of corpus data in lexical pragmatics” (*ibid.*, 236).

intended listeners that satisfied their expectations of relevance and increased their cognitive effects as they understood the sentence within its conversational context.⁹⁶

Paul certainly does not use the word *prophet* literally in the sense that it points the speaker out as either an ancient Hebrew prophet or a spiritually gifted Christian. *Prophet* here is a metonym that is only co-terminous with the speaker of the quotation when the word is adjusted in contextually relevant ways. Song quotes Anna Papafragou: “The speaker ... wants to indicate ... the appropriateness of the metonymy to name the referent of a non-lexicalized *ad hoc* concept.”⁹⁷ With Papafragou, Song contends that the speaker’s purpose is to appropriately name the referent when the actual referent does not have an exact lexicalized concept available. Speakers limit the directions in which processing may proceed. Although a word’s meaning differs with each utterance, several factors—including lexical norms, verbal context, topic, theme, and personality—provide boundaries to word meaning even as they present trajectories upon which word meaning can vary.

Commentators frequently note how peculiar Paul’s use of *prophet* (1:12) is in this context. Barrett suggests that labelling the speaker of this quotation a *prophet* was like the epithet ascribed to Caiaphas in John 11:51—not necessarily a personal compliment but a circumstantial fact.⁹⁸ Ceslas Spicq, also assuming the attribution of the quotation to Epimenides, associates the original speaker with Balaam’s ass because neither of them was conscious of the truth they told.⁹⁹ Calvin attributed qualms about applying the title *prophet* to pagan writers as superstitious scruples; “All truth is from God,” after all.¹⁰⁰ These suggestions explain the odd usage by assuming, first, that Paul was referring to the original author of this quotation and, second, that Paul agreed with its contents. It is not certain, however, that Paul was doing either. It is worth noting again that ancient references to Epimenides never call him a prophet.

⁹⁶ See Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 249.

⁹⁷ Song, “Metaphor and Metonymy,” 98. He cites Anna Papafragou, “Metonymy and Relevance,” *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 7, 141–75, at 157. He disagrees with Papafragou that metonymy is *necessarily* echoic. He argues that expanding the notion of echo to this extent is unhelpful. This distinction does not affect the insights I am pointing out regarding *prophet* as metonymic. See also Anna Papafragou, “Figurative Language and the Semantics-Pragmatics Distinction,” *Language & Literature* 5 (1996): 179.

⁹⁸ Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 131.

⁹⁹ *Les Épitres Pastorales*, vol. 2, 2 vols., Etudes Bibliques (Paris: Gabalda et Cie, 1969), 609.

¹⁰⁰ *Commentaries*, 247–48.

As noted, Paul used a marked construction for the quotative frame (1:12a).¹⁰¹ Quinn claims that it intensifies the individual's belonging to a group, but he assumes that it is a group of ethnic Cretans.¹⁰² It seems, however, that Paul is intensifying the speaker's belonging to the contingent of troublemakers (1:10–11). The troublemakers are Paul's reason for the instructions of 1:5–9 (causal conjunction γάρ in 1:10). While advancing this slur, the *prophet* holds elevated status within a contingent that presumes to lead the Cretan church. Even if the title does not literally apply to the originator of the quotation, it is appropriate for use within a community that values Jewish notions of status, such as the Cretan church. Thus, we disambiguate a term that the original audience would have rapidly recognized as elevated, figurative, ironic, and even ridiculous.

Basic pragmatic processes are necessary to relevance-guided biblical hermeneutics, but they only bring the reader to a point of grasping the *conceptual representation* or *logical form* of the linguistically-encoded sentence.¹⁰³ That is, they help to accomplish the essential step of decoding semantic values, but utterance interpretation requires other levels of comprehension. An audience has only grasped a speaker's meaning when it grasps the higher-level explicatures of her utterance. To this, we now turn.

II. Higher-Level Explicatures

Grice reasoned that bridging the gap between sentence meaning and utterance meaning involved completing basic pragmatic processes like those discussed above; once a hearer had resolved ambiguities and assigned references from the logical form, it only remained to infer what the speaker *meant*, but did not *say*.¹⁰⁴ Huang recounts how pioneering Relevance theorists, Sperber and Wilson, recognized the need for pragmatic inference to interpret even some *explicit* features of utterances.¹⁰⁵ In other words, speakers overtly signal critical cues to meaning that are not either lexicalized or grammaticalized; they are, nevertheless, recoverable on the basis of explicit features of language, so they coined the

¹⁰¹ Marked language illuminates speaker attitude. Levinson calls this his *M-Principle* and explains: "Indicate an abnormal, nonstereotypical situation by using marked expressions that contrast with those you would use to describe the corresponding normal, stereotypical situations." Quoted in Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 88.

¹⁰² Quinn, *Letter to Titus*, 109.

¹⁰³ The italicized phrases are virtually interchangeable in RT for the [intermediate] end-product of applying basic pragmatic processes to a sentence. For example and explanation, see Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 298, 306; see also Uchida, "Text and Relevance," 162.

¹⁰⁴ Although the words *meant* and *said* do not sound technical, these were terms Grice use consistently in his writing to refer to implicit, inferentially enriched speech and explicit, linguistically encoded speech, respectively. See Grice, "Logic and Conversation," *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ "Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics," 153–54.

term *explicature*. In live speech, these features may include facial expressions and vocal inflections; in written discourse, readers must examine contextual indicators.

Let us have a working definition for *explicature*. According to Raymond Gibbs and Markus Tendahl, explicatures are “elaborations of the expression’s logical form that respect speaker’s intentions.”¹⁰⁶ Green says that an explicature “is the linguistically encoded meaning in addition to the information linked to it that is pragmatically inferred from context.”¹⁰⁷ Theorists distinguish between *strong* and *weak explicatures* based on how critical the explicature is for understanding a speaker’s intended meaning and how prominent the speaker has made it.¹⁰⁸ I will speak of explicatures as *all of the information that a hearer derives on the basis of formal features of an utterance, even those that require some level of inference as opposed to straightforward semantic decoding*.

To understand how complex speech-types, such as irony, operate through a Relevance-theoretical model we must realize that a speaker always communicates *higher-level explicatures*—i.e., those explicatures that convey her attitude toward *what is said*.¹⁰⁹ Higher-level explicatures reveal whether a statement is the speaker’s own thought or the speaker’s attribution of someone else’s thought, whether sentences render a positive or negative judgment or serve a dismissive hearsay function, for instance. These explicatures also regard how deeply layered the assumption of reciprocal knowledge is (i.e., *the speaker thinks that the hearer knows that the speaker believes that the hearer desires that ...*). Utterances communicate more than the sum of the words and syntax in their linguistically-encoded sentences, because an utterance is *sentence plus context*. One of the most important facts about an utterance that hearers must determine is the speaker’s attitude toward what she is saying. In fact, unless we understand the speaker’s attitude, we fail to correctly interpret her statement.

The Speaker’s Attitude toward a Sentence

A speaker communicates both propositional content and her attitude toward it, which impacts the meaning of sentences significantly. Recognizing this is nowhere more crucial than when the speaker has a disassociative or critical attitude toward a statement. Even

¹⁰⁶ “Cognitive Effort and Effects,” 392.

¹⁰⁷ “Relevance Theory and Theological Interpretation,” 79.

¹⁰⁸ See, for instance, Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 309.

¹⁰⁹ Grice used “what is said” to refer to everything that speakers explicitly convey. See “Logic and Conversation,” 44, *et passim*. Goh outlines explicatures with an application to biblical studies in “Honoring Christ,” 30–43.

John L. Austin, original Speech-Act theorist and contemporary of Grice, considered the importance of ascertaining speaker attitude toward a sentence. Without the refined categories of later theorists, Austin recognized that sentences do not unambiguously carry meanings apart from a speaker's intentions. In short form, one of the ways he expressed this hypothesis was in his claim that saying "*p*" does not imply "I believe *p*."¹¹⁰ Each utterance involves the speaker's choice to express her own thoughts or to present the thoughts of another. Theorists refer to these as *descriptive* use and *interpretive* use, respectively. In the second type, rather than her own thoughts, the speaker expresses her attitude toward other (sometimes fabricated or supposed) ideas or persons. Relevance-guided interpretation must interrogate the attitude Paul conveys toward what he says when he employs irony, metonymy, and other types of interpretive, rather than descriptive, language use.¹¹¹

The pragmatic difference between *Sue is so beautiful* and *Sue thinks she is so beautiful* is the nature of the explicature. It pertains to the attitude of the speaker toward the proposition *Sue is beautiful*. All-important to the truth-conditional content of the first utterance is whether or not, by the measure implied in the relationship between speaker and audience, Sue actually is so beautiful, but such is not important to the truth-conditional content of the second utterance. Only the attitude of the speaker is. The *semantic* difference resides in the word *thinks*, which does not in itself imply a negative attitude, but it does remove the notion *Sue is so beautiful* from the speaker herself. This distancing leads the rational hearer to infer two explicatures: first, that the speaker is not expressing this as her own thought and, second, that she has a critical attitude toward the sentence. Only the pragmatic effect of the utterance is subject to truth-conditional evaluation. The hearer must infer the speaker's attitude or fail to comprehend. A hearer would not understand either utterance properly without ascertaining the attitude of the speaker toward the statement, even if he had exhaustive semantic knowledge of the lexemes and syntax at use.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ "The Meaning of a Word," in *J.L. Austin: Philosophical Papers*, ed. James O. Urmson and Geoffrey J. Warnock, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 55–75, at 63–64.

¹¹¹ Most Relevance theorists view irony as an echoic use of language. See Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 280–94; Wilson, "Pragmatics of Verbal Irony," 1722–43. Others hold to the original Gricean position that irony is pretence. See Gregory Currie, "Why Irony Is Pretence," in *The Architecture of the Imagination: New Essays on Pretence, Possibility, and Fiction*, ed. Shaun Nichols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 111–33; Garmendia, "A (Neo)Gricean Account." A particular view of irony is not essential to my thesis. My point is the fact of Paul's irony, not the type.

¹¹² Discerning the writer's attitude corresponds to Schleiermacher's intuitions who, in David W. Tracy's words, emphasized "the interpreter's need for 'empathy' and 'divination' of the original author's feelings and

Grice was not far from recognizing the importance of what Relevance theorists now call *explicature*. Clark writes, “Perhaps the key thing to notice here, given its importance in the development of RT, is that Grice is assuming that working out what is being communicated involves making rational inferences about the communicator’s intentions.”¹¹³ So, authorial intention is crucial to meaning. If Paul intended to expose the offences of a divisive group in the community and to prescribe a remedy—which seems to be the case in Titus 1:10–11 and 1:13—then we are compelled to ask, *How does verse twelve fit in?* The verse appears to represent a central problem by providing a disconcerting example of leadership malpractice. This reading complements and contributes to Paul’s overall development of the theme of ethno-religious division in Titus.¹¹⁴

Are not speaker intentions passé in a post-modern literary-critical environment?

As Gibbs notes, “There has been heated debate in many areas of philosophy, anthropology and literary theory as to whether intentions play a significant role in the interpretation of both oral and written discourse.”¹¹⁵ Gibbs describes three views about speaker intention within cognitive linguistics: 1) the *independence* view, in which utterance meaning emerges from a two-step process of linguistic decoding, then encyclopedic enrichment; 2) the *constructivist* view, in which the speaker’s utterance forms ideas within the hearer’s mind that fluidly incorporate both semantic and real-world information; and 3) the *intentional* view, in which the hearer takes sentence meaning and encyclopedic information into account but arrives at a meaning in harmony with the speaker’s intentions based on common knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes.¹¹⁶ In contrast to the independence view, the intentional view holds that speaker intention is also a necessary category of information for utterance processing. In contrast to the constructivist view, the intentional view holds that speaker intention is an essential constraint upon what semantic and encyclopedic

intentions.” See “Interpretation (Hermeneutics),” in *International Encyclopedia of Communications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 343–49, at 344.

¹¹³ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 61.

¹¹⁴ These last two sentences exhibit the logic of mutual adjustment that Clark discusses (*ibid.*, 148). Inferring one explicature leads to cognitive effects, including the illumination of thematic development in Titus. I discuss Jewish religious culture in Titus in Chapter Two under *Cognitive Environment*.

¹¹⁵ Gibbs, “Intentionalist Controversy,” 183.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 185–86.

information is appropriate to utterance interpretation. The intentional view coincides with the importance of the dialectic of speaker attitude in RT as both content and constraint.

Gibbs surveys fascinating empirical research on textual communication that found people willing to spend significant time trying to figure out anomalous (non-sensical) sentences if they believed them to be produced by a poet rather than a computer. Subjects quit deciphering difficult sentences more quickly if they believed them to be produced by a computer rather than a human. This research suggests that authorial intention is pivotal even to a hearer's decision to invest effort in interpreting an utterance. In RT, utterances, as ostensive inferential communication, *definitionally* involve intention.¹¹⁷

Against the fashionable assumption within the humanities (especially criticism of art and literature) that meaning is not constrained by authorial intent, I quote Gibbs at length explaining the position of cognitive linguistics:

On the one hand, critics of the intentional view often conceive of literature and other texts as having a life of their own and consequently claim they should not be interpreted under the constraints of any possible communicative intentions of the producer(s) of that text. This 'autonomy of meaning' position views linguistic interpretation as a critical practice that can be extended in time beyond that associated with understanding of everyday speech and writing to exploit the multitude of possible meanings that are 'in the text.' Cognitive scientists, on the other hand, mostly assume that language understanding refers to immediate psychological and linguistic processes that occur in real-time to derive speakers'/authors' primary communicative intentions. Understanding, under this view, is a goal-oriented, unconscious mental activity that seeks to recover communicative intentions within the time-frame in which everyday speech and writing are ordinarily comprehended.¹¹⁸

Contrary to currents in the humanities, Relevance theorists expect that speaker intention is not only recoverable, but essential. Utterances provide both explicit and implicit indications of a speaker's attitude toward what she said.¹¹⁹ Often, retrieving and understanding this attitude is as crucial to interpretation as any other information, but successful retrieval depends upon a hearer's attention to contextual indicators that can become more opaque to secondary audiences. These indicators are both discourse-contextual and situation-contextual, both linguistically-encoded and pragmatically-inferred. In the case of Titus, historical-contextual and canonical-contextual evidence, when used with discernment, can help to reconstruct some of these indicators.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 190.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 183–84.

¹¹⁹ Sperber and Wilson, *Pragmatics*, 3.

We do not claim to possess exclusive insight into the author's identity or make unverifiable assertions as to his psychological state when we endeavor to ascertain Paul's attitude toward sentences in Titus.¹²⁰ We merely try to discern, on the basis of linguistic evidence that is readily available to any careful examiner, whether and in what way Paul has implicated his own attitude toward a statement. Discerning intention or attitude does not require sophistication or inordinate effort. As Furlong states, "Ordinary hearers have some mechanism (generally successful, as far as we know) for recognizing speakers' intentions."¹²¹

The peculiar quotative frame (Titus 1:12a) seems to implicate Paul's attitude not only toward what is said but also toward who said it as a higher-level explicature of distance and disapproval. It serves a disassociating function and appears to be *hearsay functional*. Allow me to use colloquialism to paraphrase: *one o' the boys—some prophet of theirs—even said*. Obviously, this is not a literal translation, but I want to express in English the thrust of Paul's distancing language. It is difficult to capture the thrust of the quotative frame in English without grasping for an idiom to convey the distance and possible contempt. Reiko Itani calls hearsay an indicator of "diminished speaker commitment."¹²² Such higher-level explicatures imply the degree of a statement's trustworthiness or lack thereof.

In ostensive communication, speakers make their communicative intention manifest. This making manifest involves the speaker's desire for sympathy. By plainly recounting an objectionable behavior (1:12), Paul trusted his readers to conclude what he concluded, just as he had. He distanced himself from the quotation and its speaker. He was not expressing his thoughts about Cretans as such; he was testifying that some troublemaker was saying unacceptable things about them. In this way, he invited his hearers to see the stark bigotry. Huizenga, in contrast, exemplifies an interpretation that assumes Paul's sympathy toward the substance of the Cretan quotation. She refers to "the author's prejudices about Jews and Cretans."¹²³ To her, Paul merely expressed his view of the Cretans using straightforward, descriptive language. Let us now examine other specific aspects of speaker attitude that appear in Titus and yield higher-level explicatures.

¹²⁰ See Gibbs, "Intentionalist Controversy," 195. He does not discuss the Bible specifically. I apply his arguments to utterances in Titus.

¹²¹ "Relevance Theory," 45.

¹²² Reiko Itani, "A Relevance-Based Analysis of Hearsay Particles: With Special Reference to Japanese Sentence-Final Particle *Te**," *RTAI* (1998): 47–68, at 48–49.

¹²³ *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 145.

Use versus Mention

Relevance theorists distinguish between a speaker's *use* versus her *mention* of a statement. One speaker may *use* "Yeah, right," to convey the linguistically-encoded content of an answer in the affirmative. Another may *mention* "Yeah, right," while expressing distance or disassociation from the statement. In the latter instance, she is speaking ironically, and her meaning happens to be virtually the opposite of the linguistically-encoded meaning of the words she spoke. Speakers may convey numerous degrees of distance along the continuum between sympathetic *use* and disassociative *mention*; and these can be complex, especially with multiple layers of indirect speech. Every utterance involves some implication of the speaker's attitude toward the sentence; *use* and *mention* are RT's technical designations for naming this fundamental distinction.¹²⁴

The distinction between *using* [sorts of] language and *mentioning* [sorts of] language—between *using* sentences and *mentioning* sentences—is important for understanding echoic speech. An utterance that *uses* a sentence reflects the speaker's own thoughts, whereas an utterance that *mentions* a sentence reflects another person's thoughts or the speaker's thoughts from another time. Relevance theorists usually call this second type of speech *echoic*.

The following example demonstrates the scaling back of linguistically-encoded indicators for recognizing echoic speech: Suppose a parent waits thirty minutes for her fifteen-year-old daughter to prepare for a school function. The parent grumbles, "Five minutes," she says; 'Five minutes'!" The echo is explicit, as is the subject (*she*), the speaker's daughter. Suppose the parent mutters, "Five minutes,' huh?!" This, again, is an echo of her daughter's utterance with the same level (although a slightly different kind) of disassociation but without the linguistically-encoded subject to indicate that the words were not the parent's own. Typical adult English-speakers would discern that she implicitly critiques someone else's speech because of the distancing mechanism in her echoic utterance. The mother could adequately convey an ironic sense by muttering, "five minutes,'?!" The parent holds the phrase *five minutes* up for criticism. Connotations include, *My daughter is making me wait longer than she admits*. The identity of the original speaker of the phrase and the exact phrase itself are both of secondary importance

¹²⁴ Incidentally, *use* and *mention* parallel distinctions in RT between *description* and *interpretation*, respectively. I typically italicize these terms when I wish to emphasize their technical sense in this thesis.

for interpretation. What matters according to a relevance-guided hermeneutic is her attitude toward the sentence.

According to Seto, in echoic use, a speaker mentions the thoughts of another while leaving the interpretative nature of the representation implicit. In irony, the interpretive nature typically remains implicit.¹²⁵ Paul was not using the term *prophet* (1:12) in a literal or descriptive sense, and he seems to have been speaking echoically. Seto quotes Sperber and Wilson regarding echoic mentions:

Some have their source in actual utterances, others in thoughts or opinions; some have a real source, others an imagined one; some are traceable back to a particular individual, whereas others have a vaguer origin. When the echoic character of the utterance is not immediately obvious, it is nevertheless suggested.¹²⁶

Paul was *echoing* the supposed designation of the speaker that his fellow troublemakers would have given him (perhaps in Paul's imagination).

A common but dubious assumption when interpreting this passage is to ascribe to Paul (even tacitly) a sympathetic attitude toward the speaker of the quotation. Although, as Gibbs states, "experimental evidence demonstrates that readers can easily distinguish irony that is speaker-intended from irony that is not speaker-intended;" he explains that interpreters who are removed from the original social context of an utterance—and are, thereby, *eavesdroppers*—are especially susceptible to the error of misattributing attitudes to speakers who do not hold those attitudes but rather hold other, contrasting attitudes.¹²⁷

Echoic language is not direct, but *attributive*. The speaker engages in a meta-representative mode of speech that implicitly *attributes* statements to another speaker or to the speaker at an earlier time. A speaker using attributive language *can* be sympathetic toward her statement, but she implies that the word or idea is not her own. For instance, upon experiencing an unanticipated influx of bad fortune, a speaker may say, "When it rains, it pours." She may or may not consciously trace this slogan back to the early twentieth-century Morton Salt Company advertisement, but she is probably cognizant that she did not invent it and that her hearers also know this. Her speech is echoic and attributive, yet she affirms the substance of the slogan in her usage. This maneuver, however, often disassociates the speaker from the statement and allows her to convey, even while she makes the statement, a critical attitude toward its content. In this example, the

¹²⁵ See "On Non-Echoic Irony," 239–40.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 240, quoting Sperber and Wilson (1981, 309–10).

¹²⁷ "Intentionalist Controversy," 194.

critical attitude might be toward the inappropriateness of spouting pithy slogans when a crisis is afoot or toward a pessimistic outlook that might otherwise steal her levity. Wilson contends that irony is primarily accounted for as an echoic use of language, and she says that two actions are typical: first, echoic attribution to another person or group of people or to people in general and, second, conveying disapproval toward the statement.¹²⁸ Paul did these two very things: First, he made it known that the words he stated were not his own by attributing the quotation to *someone* among *them* (1:12). Second, he conveyed his disapproval of attitudes represented by such words by, for instance, instructing Titus to rebuke *them* (1:13). The next aspect of speaker attitude that we will examine involves the dynamics of insult language in Titus 1:12.

In-Group and Out-Group Insult Language

It matters *who* says things. Just imagine the difference in implications between Katy Perry singing her hit song *I kissed a girl, and I liked it*, versus Justin Bieber singing the same lyrics. Paul spoke of a situation that Titus needed little effort to comprehend. As Sperber and Wilson explain, hearers seek “an interpretation of the speaker’s meaning that satisfies the presumption of optimal relevance,” while following “a path of least effort.”¹²⁹ Paul assumed that Titus knew of an ethno-religious superiority contest within the Cretan church. Readers can determine this fact without making any particular commitment to the interpretation of Titus 1:12. The historical circumstances of Pauline mission in the Gentile world and Paul’s down-grading of Jewish and quasi-Jewish religio-cultural interests in the epistle (1:10, 14; 3:9) reinforce the perception that ethno-religious tensions obtained in the church.¹³⁰ More specifically, a false sense of ethno-religious inferiority was a problem for the Cretan church and for the gospel on the island. In the context of a leadership discussion (1:5–16), Paul exposed one of the prime examples of malpractice. The presumptive leaders were inferiorizing the Cretan people.¹³¹ No wonder Paul calls for a stern rebuke (1:13)!

Regardless of the particular interpretation one holds, the Cretan quotation represents an insult (whether playful, ironic, or caustic) in some select context. Linguists have recently become more prolific about the social effects of disparaging humor and

¹²⁸ Wilson, “Pragmatics of Verbal Irony,” 1735.

¹²⁹ “Pragmatics” (2007), 474.

¹³⁰ I outline Paul’s development of religio-cultural tension in Chapter Two under *Literary Context*.

¹³¹ Although non-standard, *inferiorize* is a direct and intuitive term for the effect of bigotry. It has appeared in the *Urban Dictionary* since 2013. See “Inferiorize,” *Urban Dictionary (Non-Standard Words, Definitions, and Citations)*, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=inferiorize> (accessed 5/24/18).

devoted a significant amount of scholarship to the various ways speakers employ insult language.¹³² Such usage often retains not only the content of its target but also of the archetypal user of the insult or slur. For instance, the racial slur “n---r” carries not only semantic content (e.g., *person of African descent*) but also the situational content that reproduces the archetypal social relation between people when the word is used. The user of the slur relates to the target of the slur as a white plantation owner, and recreates the social context that makes the speaker a social superior and the target an inferior. Even when appropriated for more positive in-group uses as a term of affection, speakers still echo some of its original social dynamics, which is one reason that it is not an appropriate cross-group epithet. Thus, insults do not merely reproduce semantic content but also socio-pragmatic content. Yoon argues that this fact operates across languages and is a macro-linguistic reality.¹³³

If Paul were intending to reproduce the situational content of the quotation as from a trustworthy Cretan source, his choice to refer to the speaker with an indefinite pronoun (τις, *someone*, 1:12a) could subtly undermine this goal. Rather, Paul downplays the original social context of the quotation (as from Epimenides, for instance, assuming he knew the origin) in order to emphasize the tertiary contemporary context of the quotation as it concerns Titus’s vulnerable congregation. *Somebody*—presumably considered to be a *prophet* among the people with whom Paul has voiced concern—was propagating the sentiment expressed in this quotation. By attesting to the quotation’s currency among the troublemakers, Paul exposed the deeper problem of ethno-religious bigotry and bullying.¹³⁴

In historical contexts of bigotry, where members of high-status categories use slurs and insults to target members of low-status categories, people from the latter group occasionally adopt (a.k.a. *appropriate*) slurs with which to refer to themselves. Because *who* is speaking affects the significance of degrading language, attribution of the quotation is pivotal. The *prima facie* reading assumes that Paul drew it directly from Epimenides’s own in-group banter, but we have already cast doubt on the helpfulness or accuracy of this attribution. If the quotation originated with Epimenides (a possibility), Paul either

¹³² E.g. Donald A. Saucier, Conor J. O’Dea, and Megan L. Strain, “The Bad, the Good, the Misunderstood: The Social Effects of Racial Humor,” *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, *The Psychology of Humor 2* (2016): 75–85, at 77. They survey recent studies and conduct original cognitive linguistic research.

¹³³ See Yoon, “Semantic Constraint,” 47. He presents research on the reproduction of social relations in Korean and English.

¹³⁴ Paul uses the terms μισέω (*hate*, 3:3) and πλῆκτης (*bully*, 1:7) to refer to corresponding ideas in Titus.

downplayed or did not know its origin, possibly because the troublemakers were using Epimenides's Cretan credentials as an excuse to insult the Cretans.

Assuming Paul's sympathetic attitude toward the quotation by pointing to its dubious historic attribution has more recent analogies. Allow me to illustrate: Controversy surrounded then President-Elect Donald Trump's announcement that Steve Bannon would be his Chief Strategist, because Bannon had provided a platform for alt-right and white-supremacist political voices on his Breitbart News Network. See how his successor at Breitbart, Joel Pollack, defended him in this excerpt from an interview with Steve Inskeep:

INSKEEP: And let me ask another thing. And this is another Bannon quote, and we can pull out quotes. But it's a quote that he made in a 2011 radio interview that gets to maybe what he wants to do inside the country. He criticized feminists. He said, "Women that would lead this country would be pro-family. They would have husbands. They would love their children." And I'm just reading the quote here – "They wouldn't be a bunch of dykes that came from the Seven Sisters schools." What's he driving at there?

POLLAK: I don't know. But there is a political correctness in this country that would say that if you said that once on a radio show, that you should be drummed out of public life. I would defy you to find a person in the LGBTQ community who has not used that term either in an endearing sense, or in a flippant, jovial, colloquial sense. I don't think you can judge Steve Bannon's views.¹³⁵

Pollak's defense was that Bannon used terms that people within "the LGBTQ community" themselves use. Essentially, he supposes that their use grants permission for outsiders of the group to also use such language. This logic is tacitly accepted in much of human society, as when someone asserts, *I can say this; I heard it from a [term for a member of an ethnic, racial, gender, or other group]*. Conventional interpretations imply that Paul relied on this logic, but it seems to me more likely that his opponents did.

In an original research article on the psychology of humor, Donald A. Saucier, Conor J. O'Dea, and Megan L. Strain explain why humans generally apply different expectations to insiders versus outsiders for either's use of in-group language. Some speakers attempt to use racial humor subversively to defy social hierarchy, but such attempts have the potential of reinforcing that structure whether intentionally anti-social or misunderstood as such.¹³⁶ I contend that Paul has been misunderstood. Lauren Ashwell

¹³⁵ Steve Inskeep, "Breitbart Editor Joel Pollack: Trump Strategist Steve Bannon Is A Conservative 'National Hero,'" Transcript, *Morning Edition from NPR News*, November 16, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2016/11/16/502274853/critics-come-out-against-trumps-chief-strategist-steve-bannon> (accessed 11/17/16).

¹³⁶ Saucier, O'Dea, and Strain, "The Bad, the Good," 75–85.

argues that certain slurs have no “neutral correlate,” meaning that they are not, properly speaking, a pejorative alternative, but rather an inherent debasement of the referent.¹³⁷ *Prima facie* reading assumptions virtually require that Paul presumed permission to use disparaging in-group banter. If we pay close attention to the attitude Paul expresses toward the quotation, we are not likely to arrive at this odd anti-social conclusion.

Any original, pre-biblical literary context for the quotation is lost, and whether it was initially intended to be humorous or ironic is moot; advanced by any non-Cretan, it serves to introduce or reinforce an ethnic stereotype. Rather than advancing the quotation at face value, Paul indicates that he uses the quotation to serve a logical function (δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν, *on account of this accusation*, 1:13). He either leans on its content (i.e., *because Cretans are reprobate*) or presents it as evidence (i.e., *because troublemakers degrade Cretans*). The latter makes sense; because, by exposing *someone* for disparaging the Cretans’ intrinsic nature, he anchors his case against the troublemakers in a verifiable, concrete act that clearly contradicts his life-transforming gospel (3:3–7). Paul did not use the disparaging quotation as an end in itself. For him, this kind of speech is no joking matter.

Stereotypes are difficult to undo. Even when a speaker is trying to counteract or contradict a stereotype through humor or ridicule, hearers have difficulty grasping anything but the superficial meaning of the stereotype she critiques. In research that Saucier et al. highlight, people tended to grasp only the superficial message of a satirical television show rather than understand its subversive irony.¹³⁸ They explain that with the subversive use of racial humor, “the humor may appear to advocate for the truth of those racial stereotypes,” and “the deeper subversive message may be missed.”¹³⁹ The stereotype, *Cretans are ... evil brutes*, appears in Titus 1:12, but readers often miss the evidence that Paul did not hold this view. The quotation is not a vehicle for his bigotry but evidence in a case against people who hold and advance such prejudices.

Another recent analogy of the misuse of in-group banter comes from fictional manager Mike Scott on the television series *The Office* (U.S. version). In the episode, “Diversity Day,” Scott mimicked a famous sketch by real-life comedian Chris Rock called

¹³⁷ “Gendered Slurs,” *Social Theory & Practice* 42 (2016): 228–39, *passim*.

¹³⁸ Saucier, O’Dea, and Strain, “The Bad, the Good,” 80–81. Audiences watched Comedy Central’s *The Colbert Report*, which subverts conventional political scripts by delivering American liberal talking points through a satirical American conservative mouthpiece.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

“I love black people, but I hate n---rs.”¹⁴⁰ What made Scott’s impression of Rock so painful is that he was attempting to pull it off without irony, as though he were Rock. It all came off as a horrible lampoon to anyone with the kind of social sense Yoon says humans have about the distastefulness of co-opting in-group insult language.

Ashwell highlights another problematic dimension of out-group parties co-opting in-group banter: out-groups recreate offensive pragmatic content, whether intentionally or not. This is, in part, because “paradigmatic slurs ... do not have neutral correlates.”¹⁴¹ Echoing slurs risks reconstructing the social prejudices that form their conceptual frame. The disclaimer could be as simple as *I’m from New Jersey, so I can tell this joke*. But, now notice the single layer of additional separation in the following setups: *I heard this one from a friend who’s Polish*; or *My wife is blonde, so I can say this*. Disparaging speech reinforces stereotypes and the social *status quo*, non-propositional effects that I discuss in Chapter Three.

Insulting language seems innocuous, especially when it is *just a joke*, but there are social outcomes. One who invokes an ethnic insult through sly humor or a clever jab can react to objections with, *What’s wrong? I was only kidding!* The stakes are low for the speaker but high for the target. But, the Cretan quotation finds itself in a more complex context. The quotation does not appear to simply suggest that stereotypes disparaging the Cretans are funny, acceptable, or even true. The quotation, rather than having a terminal function in the discourse, actually serves a secondary function as either a claim (the *prima facie* reading) or as evidence for a claim (my relevance-guided reading), other rhetorical functions notwithstanding.

People generally sense that playful jabs used by in-groups are unacceptable insults when used by out-groups. By way of analogy, Paul would have understood the Cretan quotation to be just as offensive in the mouth of a troublemaker as we know *d--b blonde* to be in mouth of a non-blonde.¹⁴² So, interpreters need to pay close attention to *who* is

¹⁴⁰ B.J. Novak, “Diversity Day,” *The Office* (NBC, March 29, 2005). See an extended quotation of Rock’s performance in Adam M. Croom, “The Semantics of Slurs: A Refutation of Coreferentialism,” *Ampersand* 2 (2015): 30–38. Croom argues that Rock’s liberal use of the epithet “N---a” invites such copycats.

¹⁴¹ Ashwell, “Gendered Slurs,” 239.

¹⁴² Outside the scope of this study, I wonder what kept the quotation current on Crete, assuming that it was centuries old. The appropriation of insults by targeted groups occurs for many reasons. According to tradition, the initial insult of the Cretan quotation was leveled by an in-group poet. *Could the quotation itself have been an appropriation, intended to disarm insults against Cretans? Was it later re-appropriated by out-groups to re-stigmatize Cretans?* For current RT research on appropriation in general, see Claudia Bianchi, “Slurs and Appropriation: An Echoic Account,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 66 (2014): 35–44.

speaking and, particularly, whether she is speaking as the member of the target group or as an out-group individual.

Claudia Bianchi explains why interpreters who are not part of the immediate audience have difficulty recognizing speakers' disassociative attitudes:

The crucial point is that out-groups lack unmistakable public means of making their dissociative [*sic*] attitude manifest. Even when their addressees know their non-racist or non-homophobic opinions, bystanders and eavesdroppers (especially if they are members of the target group) may mistake an echoic (ironic) use for a derogatory one.¹⁴³

Bianchi describes what I believe has been happening with the Cretan quotation. Because Paul “lack[s] unmistakable means of making [his disassociative] attitude manifest,” I contend that modern readers have mistaken his *mention* of derogatory words as his *use* of them.

Another reason interpreters need to pay close attention to *who* is speaking is that representations of *others* are always artificial. Select portions of reality or previous representations are re-conveyed (hence, *re-presented*) to formulate reality for an audience.¹⁴⁴ The audience that accepts the representation feels obliged to see the world in such a way as to perceive empirical evidence conforming to their beliefs, unless or until the fault of the representation becomes too glaring to ignore. The troublemakers certainly viewed Cretans in this way, regardless of one's reading of Titus 1:12. Several interpreters who have taken the quotation at face value have engaged in a quest to reinforce their highly selective knowledge of ancient Cretans with additional facts, even when those facts are in most other ways irrelevant.¹⁴⁵ This practice is opposed to what I think Paul was trying to accomplish. He wanted those *re-presenting* the Cretans as *evil* (κακά, 1:12) to be *silenced*, not justified. He indicated how he would deal with those troublemakers, *whom [someone] should silence* (οὐς δεῖ ἐπιστομίξειν, 1:11). Margaret Villanueva discusses this problematic kind of anthropological representation of otherness:

“Representation” in this sense means to re-present, to present again, carefully selected elements of reality from a singular perspective. A constant re-presentation of particular images and experiences as “real,” even in the forms of jokes and cartoons, poses the danger that this will become

¹⁴³ Ibid., 42–43. She spells *disassociative* correctly elsewhere.

¹⁴⁴ See Margaret A. Villanueva, “Ethnic Slurs or Free Speech? Politics of Representation in a Student Newspaper,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 27 (1996): 168–85.

¹⁴⁵ See, e.g., Baugh, “Titus,” 499–511; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 397–99. Note, also, the scathing critique of this practice in Thiselton, “Logical Role.”

“reality for us,” that facile reification may be accepted as “just the way things are.”¹⁴⁶

Studies have shown that people with prejudicial attitudes are more likely to tolerate such *re-presentation* and other prejudicial speech. The research of O’Dea et al. shows a consistent correlation between an individual’s racial attitudes and comfort level with prejudicial expressions. They survey multiple studies showing that people who have less positive attitudes toward out-group individuals and who ascribe to negative stereotypes have a significantly higher comfort level with the use of racial slurs. Such people also tend to perceive the offensiveness of racial epithets as less severe than people who have positive attitudes toward out-group individuals.¹⁴⁷ These findings comport with general intuitions, but they also reinforce the correlation between the troublemakers’ doctrine of an ethno-religious pecking order, on the one hand, and explicit insults toward Cretans, on the other. This has troubling implications for the comfort level many interpreters have with the *prima facie* reading. Samuel Bénétreau, for instance, finds Paul’s supposedly bigoted remarks in Titus 1:12b to have been acceptable for the era, but indelicate nowadays. Rather than critiquing the assumptions of this reading, he gives this caveat: *This is certainly not the tone to recommend in modern debates.*¹⁴⁸

Commensurate with a *prima facie* reading, this passage’s modern history of interpretation has exhibited what Christian S. Crandall and Amy Eschelmann call the justification-suppression model of prejudice.¹⁴⁹ Interpreters follow the impulse to either justify what appears to them to be prejudicial speech or to suppress it. Rather than using prejudicial speech, the context suggests that Paul was exposing its use. In other words, the *prima facie* reading assumes that Paul was co-opting in-group banter to shame the Cretans into shaping up morally, but this very offense appears to be what he was accusing the presumptive leaders of doing. To the presumptive leaders, the Cretans were not good enough as they were; their pedigree was a moral and religious liability. Therefore, they needed to more fully convert by observing the religio-cultural practices that the troublemakers prescribed. This was upsetting entire households (1:11); and, when those

¹⁴⁶ Villanueva, “Ethnic Slurs,” 169.

¹⁴⁷ Conor J. O’Dea et al., “Out of Bounds: Factors Affecting the Perceived Offensiveness of Racial Slurs,” *Lang.Sci.* 52 (2015): 155–64.

¹⁴⁸ *Les Épîtres Pastorales 1 et 2 Timothée, Tite*, Éditions de al Faculté de Theologie Évangélique (Vaux-sur-Seine: Édifac, 2008), 298. In French: “Ce n’est certes pas le ton à recommander dans des débats modernes.”

¹⁴⁹ Christian S. Crandall and Amy Eshleman, “A Justification-Suppression Model of the Expression and Experience of Prejudice,” *Psychological Bulletin* 129 (2003): 414–46.

presumptive leaders discovered (or invented) the *apropos* Cretan stich (1:12), their bullying became intolerable to Paul.

When Paul identified the troublemakers as *especially those from the circumcision* (1:10), he evoked a flawed ethno-religious dichotomy without necessarily endorsing it. According to the dichotomy, there were two types of people—Jews and Gentiles. Cretans were essentially a subset of the latter. The troublemakers' insults did not need to reflect specific faults of actual Cretans as much as to scorn an ambiguous class of people—those on the wrong side of this false divide. Similarly to Ashwell, Adam Croom argues that ethnic slurs are not coextensive with descriptors and are, therefore, different in content. To explain the correlation between slurs and descriptors, he introduces the notion of *conceptual anchors*.¹⁵⁰ The Cretan quotation, in the mouth of a troublemaker, is actually not coextensive with ethnic or geographic Cretans but primarily references Gentiles, whether converts or not, whose ethno-religious inferiority is highlighted on the basis of otherness from a privileged in-group of people who are Jewish or who associate deeply with things Jewish. In other words, those advancing the quotation believe that Cretans are inferior *qua* Gentiles, not *qua* Cretans.¹⁵¹ Paul forces a conceptual reversal aimed at this very religio-cultural arrogance when he accuses the troublemakers of being *unclean*, *defiled*, and *unfit for any good work* (1:14–16) after they had labelled the Cretans as *evil*, *defiled*, and *non-working* (1:12).

Croom demonstrates that slurs and descriptors do not necessarily have the same referential extension.¹⁵² This linguistic reality suggests that the *Cretans* who were being disparaged by the quotation did not strictly correspond to a group identified by the geographic or ethnic label *Cretan*. More likely, *Cretan*, among the troublemakers in the church, is code for church members who are inferior by virtue of being Gentile (or non-Jewish). Croom argues that pejoratives require a *conceptual anchor* that is not literally synonymous or coextensive with any appropriate, non-pejorative descriptor. *Cretan* has sadly *become*(!) a pejorative word itself. Paul and Titus seem to have been among the first to reckon with this. Croom argues that slurs not only refer but pass judgment. He provides a formula for the pragmatic enrichment of conceptual anchors that I parallel: Based on the

¹⁵⁰ Croom, "Semantics of Slurs," 31–37.

¹⁵¹ Wilson and Sperber explain, "The thought that is the object of the ironical attitude need not be identical to the proposition expressed by the ironical utterance but may merely resemble it in content." Quoted in Bianchi, "Slurs and Appropriation," 40.

¹⁵² Croom, "Semantics of Slurs." Ashwell's research also supports such claims. See "Gendered Slurs."

book context of Titus, wherein the ethno-religious tensions I outline feature prominently, the conceptual anchor for *Cretans* would actually be something like *ethnically, and thereby religiously, inferior, and despicable on account of it, Gentile*.¹⁵³ It might be uncomfortable for Titus to hear Paul disparaging his young congregation (as per a *prima facie* reading), but it would be socially jarring for Paul to report his awareness of and negative opinion toward what the troublemakers were trying to get away with. Paul exposed the problem of bigotry in the church by introducing the statement as having come from one of the troublemakers, an issue that Titus may have known but been too timid to address (cf. Titus 2:15).¹⁵⁴

It may be that Paul or his speaker (εἶπεν τις, *someone said*, 1:12) appropriated the statement, *Cretans are always liars* (with a few added epithets), from Callimachus's third-century BCE *Hymns* (1.8–9) or from an earlier source (e.g., Epimenides). A Cretan would have had the in-group credibility to render social commentary or to use the words ironically to subvert insults from out-group individuals; but using the quotation to assert its surface meaning silences this credible, subversive voice. So, we recognize two conflicting possibilities that many *prima facie* readings tacitly hold: first, that a Cretan spoke it, which means that it is ironic, even paradoxical, in-group banter; and, second, that Paul asserts it, which means that the in-group voice has been silenced. I propose a third possibility: Even though the troublemakers may have deferred to Epimenides's Cretan credentials, Paul perceived how they were silencing Cretan voices.

The relevance-guided reading I am suggesting has an analogy in Galatians 2:15-21 in which Paul, in the dialogue between himself and Peter, corrects a pattern of thinking that elevates Jews above Gentiles. When Paul uses the phrase, "Gentile sinners" in Galatians 2:15, rather than disparaging non-Jews, as his old way of thinking dictated, Paul was merely ironically echoing (and thereby critiquing) the fault in that way of seeing the human population. It sees the world as *us* and *them*. The terms by which people of status tend to distinguish themselves from others constantly change. Essential to Paul's new view of the world was a radical realignment of valuation that considered people equal before God,

¹⁵³ See "Semantics of Slurs," 31–37.

¹⁵⁴ I explain my use of *troublemakers* more in Chapter Two under *Literary Context*.

regardless of ethnicity, achievement, gender, religion, or other factor.¹⁵⁵ We will now look more closely at specific ways Paul defends the Cretans from biased verbal attacks.

The Irony of Paul's Scathing Reversal of Religious Designations

Regarding all forms of irony, Grice taught, "Irony is intimately connected with the expression of a feeling, attitude, or evaluation. I cannot say something ironically unless what I say is intended to reflect a hostile or derogatory judgment or a feeling such as indignation or contempt."¹⁵⁶ Wilson refines Grice's general view and explains that a writer conveys a critical or derogatory attitude toward a sentence by producing an utterance that would be pragmatically inappropriate if literally understood.¹⁵⁷ She explains that the *use/mention* distinction and hearers' proven ability to discern appropriately between them make irony successful.¹⁵⁸

The Cretan quotation itself seems inappropriate to its context (Titus 1:10–16) and to Paul's purposes in the book and in the paragraph. *If Paul is not derogating the Cretans, then what is he derogating?* Irony derogates ideas more than persons or behaviors. The *idea* that Paul derogates in 1:12 is entirely appropriate to its context—namely, that ethnicity (and its commensurate religio-cultural appurtenances) is a means of attaining status with God. I quote Wilson at length as she explains the echoic use of irony, which I see applying:

The speaker in irony does not *use* the proposition expressed by her utterance in order to represent a thought of her own which she wants the hearer to accept as true, but *mentions* it in order to represent a thought or utterance she tacitly attributes to someone else, and which she wants to suggest is ludicrously false, under-informative or irrelevant.¹⁵⁹

The speaker of irony echoes a statement or attitude (actual or imagined) by a person with whom she disagrees or with herself at an earlier time in order to disassociate herself from it. Wilson points out that empirical studies of irony demonstrate that hearers perceive ironic implicatures most readily when a speaker has conveyed in advance either the idea or

¹⁵⁵ John M.G. Barclay draws out this rhetorical move in his paraphrase of Gal 2:15-21. See *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 371.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Wilson, "Pragmatics of Verbal Irony," 1727. Without discarding Grice's notions, Wilson critiques his early assumption that irony was primarily a matter of *pretense* or *making as-if to say*. For her, Grice's explanation was inadequate, a re-articulation of classical rhetoric dressed-up in modern garb. She regards *echo* as the stock form of irony. See *ibid.*, 1723.

¹⁵⁷ See Wilson, "Pragmatics of Verbal Irony," 1727.

¹⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 1728.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1728.

the person from whom their echoic statement disassociates.¹⁶⁰ The preceding verses suggest that Paul does not hold the speaker in 1:12 to be a reliable witness.

Sperber and Wilson list three criteria that hearers intuitively use to spot irony: 1) recognition of the utterance as echoic,¹⁶¹ 2) identification of the source of the opinion echoed, and 3) recognition that the speaker's attitude toward the opinion echoed is one of rejection or disapproval.¹⁶² Grice and others have argued that irony is normally implicit. For interpretations of Titus, this means noting that the second criterion can include sources that are ambiguous and that the third criterion usually requires a measure of reasonable inference to ascertain the speaker's attitude.

Irony is indirect, not descriptive. As Clark writes, "Ironic utterances do not simply describe states of affairs; they represent other thoughts or utterances, which may in turn describe states of affairs."¹⁶³ Irony holds ideas up to scrutiny, revealing speakers' attitudes toward them. Relevance theorists consider such use to be *interpretative*. With more direct kinds of non-literal speech, such as metaphor, exaggeration, or understatement, the speaker presents her own thoughts; with irony, the discourse exhibits a more complex, second-order nature.

I suggest three relevance-guided assumptions for interpreting irony based on Sperber and Wilson's three intuitive signals for identifying irony (listed above) and developed from additional work by Relevance theorists: First, a common-sense account of the statement would judge that the speaker is not saying it on her own behalf. In this sense, the speaker echoes the idea as if from another's mouth (or pen). Second, an account of the statement that appreciates its verbal context and life context would reason that the relevance of the statement to its contexts is a function not of its linguistically-encoded content but of the speaker's power to convey her own attitude toward its content. Third, such an account of the statement would also perceive that the speaker's attitude toward the

¹⁶⁰ See *ibid.* Huang sounds a caution regarding the "'experimental paradox'—a well-known dilemma in experimental psycholinguistics The more perfect an experiment, the less like the real speech situation it is, and . . . the more like the real speech situation the experiment, the less easy for the experimenters to control It is almost impossible to design a perfect experiment." See "Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics," 142, fn6.

¹⁶¹ Seto disagrees with their first criterion, presenting instances and categories of irony that he claims are not echoic. His proposal does not affect my thesis; because even if irony is pretense, as Grice originally taught, it still involves the speaker's disassociative attitude toward the sentence. See "On Non-Echoic Irony."

¹⁶² Summarized in Seto, "On Non-Echoic Irony," 240. Derived from Sperber and Wilson, *Pragmatics*, 29–32. For detailed explanation, see Wilson, "Pragmatics of Verbal Irony," 1734–38. For a countervailing assessment of irony with some adherents in RT, see Grice, "Logic and Conversation," 49–53. Whether echo or pretense, my argument stands; the speaker's attitude is implicated as rejection or disapproval.

¹⁶³ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 292.

statement is one of disassociation in the form of ridicule, disdain, criticism, or some like attitude.¹⁶⁴

The first assumption requires readers to closely follow the general theme of church leadership that Paul is addressing in 1:5–16 and the specific topic of problematic leadership in 1:10–16. Any satisfactory interpretation of 1:12 answers the question of how the quotation and its frame emerge from the topic at-hand. Linguistically-encoded signals that these are not Paul’s own thoughts or words about Cretans accompany the quotation.

The second assumption is critical for a relevance-guided hermeneutic. The literary context and Paul’s life context (whether historical or literary-canonical) suggest that his attitude toward the statement would be more relevant than the content of the statement. To recapitulate in brief: The moral concerns of the statement are not prominent in the rest of Titus; a concern with the general Cretan populace is not relevant to the paragraph; and the disparagement of a Gentile missionary population conflicts not only with any measure of ministry sensibility but, more critically, with one of the most prominent characteristics of the Paul we all know from the NT.¹⁶⁵

Regarding the third assumption, the context signals that Paul opposes the kind of attitude represented by the content of the quotation; he instructs Titus to *rebuke them severely on account of [this] accusation* (δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν ἔλεγε αὐτοὺς ἀποτόμως, 1:13). It is difficult to imagine that Paul intended Titus to save his fledgling church in Crete by embarking on a wholesale campaign of ethnically targeted shaming, although some commentators come close to expecting such.¹⁶⁶ Titus’s rebuke was aimed at the troublemakers who had, according to Paul’s knowledge, taken the sentiment expressed in the Cretan quotation as their validation for an ethno-religious social hierarchy with theological implications contrary to his gospel. The specific points of irony that we will explore below include Paul’s use of the title *prophet* to refer to the speaker of the quotation and Paul’s reversal of Jewish religious language to shame the presumptive leaders.

¹⁶⁴ Based on a synthesis of common arguments from Wilson, “Pragmatics of Verbal Irony”; Currie, “Why Irony Is Pretence”; Seto, “On Non-Echoic Irony”; Garmendia, “A (Neo)Gricean Account”; Sperber and Wilson, “Irony in the Use-Mention Distinction.”

¹⁶⁵ The term *missionary* may come from the modern era, but I use it for a basic reality that obtained in the first-century church—a Christian community, only a few generations old, planted by geographic and ethnic non-natives, but still largely influenced by these founders. The term is shorthand for this reality. For an examination of *mission* in the PE, see Ho, “Mission in the Pastoral Epistles.” See also Ho’s dissertation on the same subject, “Do the Work of an Evangelist.”

¹⁶⁶ E.g., Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 392.

1. *Prophet*

Comprehending non-literal language does not require a two-step process in which the literal meaning is first deciphered and then discarded for a *special* sense; it is rapid and synchronic. Theorists refer to this processing as *on-line comprehension*. Gibbs discusses empirical research that shows how quickly hearers discern “the meanings of words during on-line comprehension” based on judging “a speaker’s probable intentions.”¹⁶⁷ Paul introduced a group of presumptive leaders in the verses preceding the quotation (1:12b), which suggests that these troublemakers (1:10–11) were the group from which the *prophet* (1:12a) came. This tight sequence of discourse would have influenced the original audience’s perception of Paul’s intentions. Titus and his community knew Paul’s attitude toward the presumptive *prophet* immediately. The quotation was an example of objectionable behavior.

The near context indicates that Paul was concerned with leadership malpractice; the syntax indicates that the speaker came from the company of presumptive leaders; the broader context reveals no interest in gluttony or laziness; and the quotation harmonizes with the overall ethno-religious thrust of the unhealthy doctrine that Paul addressed elsewhere in Titus. These statements are all explicatures, because they are based on visible, verifiable evidence, although not strictly on the *semantic* value of particular words (as might be represented in a lexicon) or syntax (as might be represented in a grammar).

According to Levinson, hearers reject implicatures if the discourse context negates them; because, unlike logical inferences, pragmatic presuppositions are *defeasible*. That is, they are susceptible to negation by added contextual evidence.¹⁶⁸ Hearers reject the presupposition that Paul uses the term *prophet* to honor or even to objectively label the speaker, because the discourse context casts doubt on the speaker’s trustworthiness.

I have generally been referring to irony as an echoic use of language, but RT offers two major proposals for understanding irony. First, there is Grice’s classic *irony as pretense* or *making as-if to say*.¹⁶⁹ Along these lines, Greg Currie explains that, in irony, “one pretends to be doing something which one is not doing: speaking seriously and assertively, seriously asking a question, seriously expressing distaste” while targeting “a

¹⁶⁷ “Intentionalist Controversy,” 191.

¹⁶⁸ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 186–91, esp. 190.

¹⁶⁹ Grice typically used non-technical terms to refer to features of language. See “Logic and Conversation,” 49–50. Wilson critiques Grice, partly on the basis of his definitional imprecision and partly because even he did not appreciate irony’s full pragmatic dimensions. See Wilson, “Pragmatics of Verbal Irony,” 1725–26.

restrictive or otherwise defective view of the world.”¹⁷⁰ The second proposal, *irony as echo*, is more currently common among Relevance theorists. These accounts are not incompatible. Wilson appreciates pretense accounts of irony, such as Currie’s, but also critiques them.¹⁷¹ For her, irony is essentially communicative, not expressive. Communicative speech—the stock and trade of RT—focuses on audience comprehension, whereas expressive speech does not.¹⁷² Both the echoic and pretense accounts, nevertheless, have explanatory power for a variety of irony types, and both hold that the speaker conveys a critical or mocking attitude toward her statement. Paul seems to have used the title *prophet* ironically, because he portrayed the speaker as an untrustworthy source. For Paul, the speaker to which he refers is only a *prophet* in his own mind and among the company of presumptive leaders. Paul was allowing the speaker and the listener to look on with ridicule as someone made a labelling error. Paul invited his audience to sneer at such an inappropriate title for such an offensive person. Paul and Titus know the destructive effects of bigotry; and, as everyone in the Cretan church must learn, prophets speak gospel truth, not insults.¹⁷³

Currie nuances his account by explaining that the pretense is not based upon the mode of utterance. A comedy or a tragedy, being entirely pretended, is not also entirely ironical. Rather, departures from the normal mode of utterance, signal ironic moments that can be humorous, caustic, or otherwise. Pretense itself is not ironic; it has to pretend to hold *a perspective of things* that is faulty from the authentic perspective of the speaker.¹⁷⁴ Further, according to Currie and others, framing irony with explanation defeats or nullifies it. He writes, “The kind of pretense we naturally label ironic generally requires a context that contains no explicit or conventional signals that what is said or done is pretense.”¹⁷⁵

Readers may not have access to real-time signals such as tone of voice, but they nevertheless can see linguistic cues in word choice and context that Paul is engaged in second-order metarepresentation. By *second-order*, Currie and other linguists mean the

¹⁷⁰ “Why Irony Is Pretence,” 116.

¹⁷¹ See Wilson, “Pragmatics of Verbal Irony,” 1735.

¹⁷² For detailed examination of additional distinctions, see *ibid.*; Garmendia, “(Neo)Gricean Account;” Currie, “Why Irony is Pretence.”

¹⁷³ Consider the culminating description of the depraved and unredeemed in Titus 3:3 (*hating one another*) before the *epiphany of the kindness and love of God our Savior* (3:4).

¹⁷⁴ Currie’s fuller but more opaque definition: “Irony is a matter of pretending to a limited perspective in a way which is expressive of a view you have about the limitations of some suitably related perspective, where those limitations compromise, to some degree, the reasonableness of the perspective.” See “Why Irony Is Pretence,” 124.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

abstract thinking that humans engage in every day whereby they evaluate the semantically-decoded content of utterances in alignment with the attitudes speakers demonstrate toward it. In other words, he is conveying thoughts about thoughts. Natural language practitioners use it intuitively and reliably, typically without being conscious of it.¹⁷⁶ This points to the subtlety of irony. According to Grice: “To be ironical is, among other things, to pretend..., and while one wants the pretense to be recognized as such, to announce it as pretense would spoil the effect.”¹⁷⁷ Readers understand that Paul speaks ironically without using explicit, mechanical words or phrases by which to explicate, *Now, I’m being ironic here*. His audience realized that labelling the speaker a *prophet* could not have been taken as literally true or descriptive.

Consider a present-day analogy: Republican U.S. President Donald Trump’s controversial reference to Democratic U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts as *Pocahontas* has exhibited similar interpretational problems. Warren has claimed Native American ancestry on the basis of her family’s oral history,¹⁷⁸ but opponents called the veracity of her claim into question once she began running for a competitive Senate seat in 2012. Specific actions she took that suggested she was Native American include contributing a recipe to a 1984 Native American cookbook titled *Pow Wow Chow* under the name “Elizabeth Warren—Cherokee;” quoting her aunt, who said that her family “had high cheekbones like all the Indians do;”¹⁷⁹ listing herself in a professional directory of law professors from 1986 to 1995 as a minority;¹⁸⁰ and referring to her race on Harvard University faculty rosters as Native American from 1995 until 2012.

Trump has disdainfully referred to Warren as *Pocahontas* on numerous occasions since 2016. His tone is snarky, and Warren is one of his political opponents. These facts suggest that he is attempting to ridicule Warren. Modern readers do not have access to *Paul’s* tone, but I have highlighted other indicators that suggest his disassociative attitude.

¹⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 127.

¹⁷⁷ H. Paul Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 54; see also Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 287.

¹⁷⁸ Curt Nickish quotes Warren: “These are my family stories. This is what my brothers and I were told by my mom and my dad.” See “In Mass. Senate Race, Warren on the Defensive over Native American Heritage,” Transcript, *All Things Considered from NPR News*, May 1, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2012/05/09/151784645/in-mass-senate-race-warren-on-defense-over-native-american-heritage> (accessed 5/5/18).

¹⁷⁹ Jason L. Riley, “Elizabeth Warren Lectures Native Americans About Pocahontas,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/elizabeth-warren-lectures-native-americans-about-pocahontas-1519168877> (accessed 4/24/18).

¹⁸⁰ D’Angelo Gore, “Elizabeth Warren’s ‘Pocahontas’ Controversy,” *FactCheck*, December 1, 2017, <https://www.factcheck.org/2017/12/elizabeth-warrens-pocahontas-controversy/> (accessed 4/24/18).

Pocahontas serves as a stand-in for the paradigmatic female Native American with all of the heroic and tragic honor attached to her story. Trump *mentions* the name ironically in order to hold Warren's subtle honor claims up to scrutiny and ridicule. As far as Trump is concerned, Warren is a Native American only in her own mind, and he exaggerates her minor claims to honor by naming the utmost example (in terms of fame and heroism) of Native American virtue. Jason Riley comprehends this: "Mr. Trump began calling Ms. Warren 'Pocahontas' in 2016 to mock her questionable claim of American Indian heritage."¹⁸¹

Just as commentators have misguidedly taken the Cretan quotation and its presumably venerable attribution to *some prophet* as a signal to look into ancient history for corroboration of Cretan disgrace, Warren took Trump's mention of the name *Pocahontas* as a signal to talk about the Colonial American heroine to the National Congress of American Indians, a gathering of Native Americans at which she was not on the planned schedule.¹⁸² Perceptively, Riley observes,

Ms. Warren knows that the president's Pocahontas digs are intended to mock her fabrications rather than the heritage of American Indians, but that didn't stop her from conflating the two in her speech. She accused Mr. Trump of "reducing native history, native culture, native people to the butt of a joke."¹⁸³

Assuming she grasped the intention of Trump's *mention* of the name *Pocahontas*, she deflected the attention he was bringing to her dubious claims by lecturing on an alternative target.

I think that interpreters are failing to grasp the irony of Paul's *mention* of the designation *prophet*. The historical Pocahontas is a red herring for understanding Trump's *mention*, just as the historical Cretans are a red herring for understanding Paul's *mention*. With the Cretan quotation, many interpreters either take Paul's *mention* as bigotry and

¹⁸¹ Riley, "Elizabeth Warren Lectures."

¹⁸² See Martin Pengelly, "Elizabeth Warren Seeks to Use Trump Pocahontas 'Racial Slur' as Political Tool," *The Guardian*, March 11, 2018, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/mar/11/elizabeth-warren-donald-trump-pocahontas-native-americans> (accessed 4/24/18); Amy B. Wang, "'Let's Talk about Pocahontas': Warren Addresses Native American Heritage Claims, Slams Trump," *The Washington Post*, February 14, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2018/02/14/lets-talk-about-pocahontas-elizabeth-warren-addresses-native-heritage-claims-and-slams-trump/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.db2de425f072 (accessed 4/24/18); Eric Bradner, "Warren Responds to Trump's 'Pocahontas' Jabs," *CNN*, February 14, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/14/politics/elizabeth-warren-pocahontas-trump/index.html> (accessed 4/24/18).

¹⁸³ Riley, "Elizabeth Warren Lectures."

condemn the author of Titus¹⁸⁴ or attempt to justify him by finding historical evidence for the veracity of the slur.¹⁸⁵ Some of Trump’s critics assert that his *Pocahontas* metonym directly targets Native Americans, and ignore his true aim.¹⁸⁶ In Warren’s aforementioned speech, she stated, “I’ve noticed that every time my name comes up, President Trump likes to talk about Pocahontas ... so I figured, let’s talk about Pocahontas.”¹⁸⁷ *Whether* Trump insulted Native Americans is not in question. We are considering his metonymic linguistic target, not the collateral damage. Even as Paul seems to have surfaced a paradigmatic example of the degrading teaching that the troublemakers engaged in, he ironically labelled the speaker a *prophet*. Similarly, Trump encapsulates a pattern of subtle honor claims into one exaggerated epithet as if Warren were claiming to be, not just Native American, but the most esteemed and renowned of all—*Pocahontas*.

Paul’s use of the title *prophet* in Titus 1:12 is a case of metonymy, which Song says is related to its referent by way of contiguity, whereas metaphor is related to its referent by way of resemblance.¹⁸⁸ It is not simply a straightforward replacement. Metonymical interpretations are *associatively activated* by the expressions that replace the reference. In the words of François Recanati, Metonymy is “sensitive to the linguistic and extralinguistic context in which the expression which receives the metonymical interpretation occurs.”¹⁸⁹ Paul distanced himself from a group of people and then quoted someone from that group, so uttering the word *prophet* immediately triggered a negative association. The hearers had no difficulty in discerning that Paul intended the referent—a person that had been built up as having distasteful associations—to be taken as an unreliable witness. The label comes as a punch line immediately before the quotation (εἶπέν τις ... προφήτης· Κρηῖτες..., [so] said

¹⁸⁴ E.g., Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 133–80; Stegemann, “Anti-Semitic and Racist,” 271–94.

¹⁸⁵ E.g., Baugh, “Titus,” 502, 504; or Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 397–99.

¹⁸⁶ None of this excuses Trump’s cavalier misuse of Pocahontas’s name, but the example illuminates the situation in Titus with its emotional and social impact. I suspect that Paul had a more virtuous and generous attitude as he denounced the troublemakers in the Cretan church who were seeking advantage by putting their neighbors down. Warren stood by her claims until a DNA test proved she had no Native American lineage. It is not clear whether she ever gained anything personally, but the institutions she belonged to used her purported ethnicity to tout their diversity and inclusion statistics. Trump smirks and delights to ridicule Warren for supposedly seeking gain by making unsubstantiated honor claims. Presidential Press Secretary Sarah Sanders tries to spin the allegation that Trump was offending Native Americans: “I think what most people find offensive is Senator Warren lying about her heritage to advance her career.” Quoted by Gore in “Elizabeth Warren’s ‘Pocahontas.’” Michelle Ye Hee Lee quotes a June 27, 2016 Tweet, in which Trump retorted, “It’s so unfair to Pocahontas.” See “Why Donald Trump Calls Elizabeth Warren ‘Pocahontas,’” *Washington Post*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2016/06/28/why-donald-trump-calls-elizabeth-warren-pocahontas/> (accessed 4/24/18).

¹⁸⁷ Quoted by Riley in “Elizabeth Warren Lectures.”

¹⁸⁸ See “Metaphor and Metonymy,” 95–96.

¹⁸⁹ Quoted by Song in *ibid.*, 96.

some ... *prophet*, “*Cretans ...*”), grammatically unnecessary, suggesting that it is the overextension of Paul’s disassociative reference to the speaker of the quotation.

Paul could not point to a pre-existing, fully lexicalized referent, so he employed the label *prophet* to refer to a category of people that he described as not very prophetic (i.e., not truth-tellers). In the absence of an exact lexicalization of what Paul had in mind, he used *prophet* to convey a complex of ideas, including his own attitude toward *them*. This higher-level explicature includes the notion that he was not necessarily the person who placed the label *prophet* upon the speaker of the quotation. The metonym is echoic—Paul attributes the labelling to *them*. Masa-Aki Yamanashi observes that ironic utterances often involve a switch in register or style.¹⁹⁰ Seto describes this as a heightening of intensity.¹⁹¹ Certainly, the use of the word *prophet* is an elevation of formality or status, even a heightening or hyperbolic (and sarcastic) attribution of religious valuation. It is like when the swaggering Han Solo referred to the persnickety princess Leia as “your worshipfulness.”

Levinson highlights a crucial contention of the *correspondence theory* of metaphor, originally articulated by Max Black, namely, that effective metaphors typically combine two conceptual fields such that the effect of the metaphor is spoiled to the extent that it is explained.¹⁹² Not all domains are equally compatible; however, stronger correspondence between domains leads to more effective metaphors. Metaphors in which the target (the object defined) and the symbol (the object defining) have conceptual, phonetic, or other correspondences can be especially strong. *Prophet* has cultural currency for Titus’s community. Quinn recognizes the significance of the title, writing, “Prophetic credentials were found and valued among the Jewish Christians.”¹⁹³ It appropriately refers to a *speaking* participant. In the social and conversational contexts of Titus, the conceptual correspondence would be strong, so the metaphor works smoothly and effectively.

Another indicator of irony, according to Seto, is known as topicalization. *Theme* and *focus* are two kinds of topicalization. Focus topicalization appears in Paul’s use of the word *prophet*. Seto uses the following sentence as an example: *A fine friend she turned out*

¹⁹⁰ “Some Issues in the Treatment of Irony and Related Tropes,” *RTAI* (1998): 271–81, at 277.

¹⁹¹ See “On Non-Echoic Irony,” 239.

¹⁹² Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 159–60. Although this contention may not have concerned Max Black in his original articulation of the theory (*Models and Metaphors*, 1962), it coincides with the rapidity of natural language comprehension, because it does not posit a complex, multi-step process for interpretation.

¹⁹³ *Letter to Titus*, 109. He cites Acts 13:1; 15:22, 32; 1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 2:20; and 4:11.

to be.¹⁹⁴ That the statement is ironic is signaled by the topicalization of *friend* and the implied false complimentary attitude. Similarly, a *prophet of their own* may be taken as a topicalization of the purveyor of this quotation, further suggesting Paul's disassociative attitude toward him. In Titus 1:12a, Paul employed several kinds of emphasis, including topicalization, the exaggerated honorary title, and the emphatic ownership phrase *one of their very own*. Combining this with Paul's apparent disassociative attitude toward the group out of which this speaker comes yields a strong case for irony—suggesting that Paul's use of this quotation is by no means to advance the substance of what was said.

Seto describes how ironic metonymy (e.g., *name-calling*) works by use of a graph (reproduced below). He diagrams a horizontal baseline with a positive field above the line and a negative field below it. In the case of personal descriptions, the positive field represents a scale of compliments; the negative field represents a scale of insults. Seto argues that the degree of irony and the greatness of cognitive effects emerge from the measure of distance between what the speaker means and the propositional content of the utterance as linguistically-encoded.¹⁹⁵ Seto claims that the characteristic function of verbal irony is to present an original thought and to show the speaker's critical attitude toward that thought. Ironic speech invokes an idea for the purpose of implicit ridicule. While irony is inherently complex, it is still highly economical, because hearers can derive a significant cognitive-effect *bang* for their processing-effort *buck*. Gibbs and Tendahl argue that metaphor does not necessarily require or reward more cognitive effort than literal speech. Appropriate metaphors can be the most efficient and effective way to convey a meaning.¹⁹⁶ The inherent complexity of irony has to do with the fact that it requires second-order processing (thinking about thoughts). This is irony: to hold up a thought for implicit criticism. Expressions that are within the mildly positive level that Seto outlines are not typically considered ironic. Seto writes, "We would have to increase the voltage of meaning in order to make good ironic statements."¹⁹⁷ Seto recognizes and shows in his examples that most echo markers (which include signals of irony) involve highly charged or overcharged positive modifiers (either at the sentence or word level) that would not be used if the speaker were merely communicating their own positive attitude toward the subject. So, for example, when someone does something stupid and a speaker refers to

¹⁹⁴ Seto, "On Non-Echoic Irony," 247.

¹⁹⁵ See *ibid.*, 244–45, esp. figure 18, page 245.

¹⁹⁶ See "Cognitive Effort and Effects."

¹⁹⁷ "On Non-Echoic Irony," 245.

them by saying, *[So-and-so] is a genius*; it is overcharged. If *so-and-so* had actually done something smart, the speaker might normally have been expected to complement them by saying something closer to *[so-and-so] is smart*. Positive exaggeration (e.g., *prophet*) is, therefore, a signal of echoic and ironic use. We will now look at one last example of Paul's use of irony—the *Category Reversal* found in the surrounding context of the Cretan quotation.

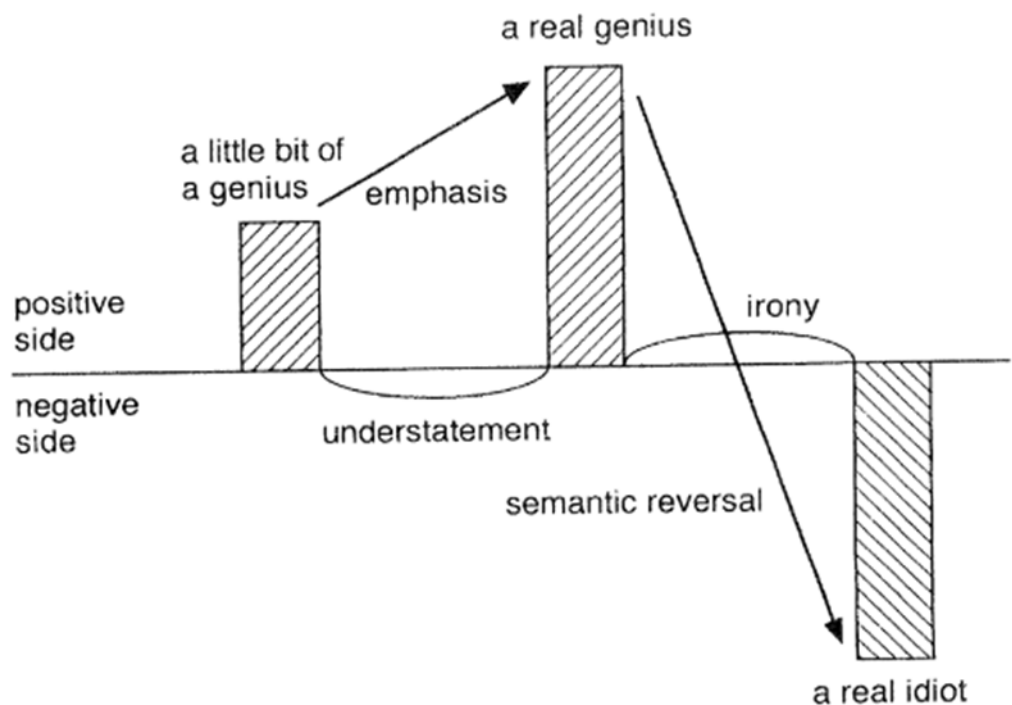


Figure 1: Graph from Seto, “On Non-Echoic Irony,” 245.

2. *Category Reversal*

Another point of irony worth noting is Paul's remapping of the Cretan quotation's insulting language onto a constellation of concepts laden with religious valuations that were salient for Jews. If the Cretan church was developing in an ethno-religious environment such as the book of Titus portrays, then they would have recognized the extent to which the quotation's claims were loaded with religious freight in the mouth of contemporary Jews that they were not in the mouth of an ancient Cretan (e.g., Epimenides). Paul placed the speaker and his supporters on the wrong side of their own valuations. In the final two verses of the pericope (1:10–16), not long after the hexameter quotation (1:12b), Paul waxes poetic himself, using parallelism and religious imagery to expose the hypocrisy of the people who were advancing the doctrine of Cretan (i.e., Gentile) inferiority within the community.

Although Paul did not develop the negative qualities ascribed to Cretans by the quotation (e.g., deceit, laziness, gluttony) as moral issues later in Titus, its contents are not totally irrelevant. The quotation has an existential thrust—that is, it concerns moral *being* more than moral *doing*, but Paul used it as a foil against which to parody the troublemakers. The troublemakers were the true *non-working bellies* (γαστέρες ἀργαί 1:12), desiring *disgraceful gain* (αἰσχροῦ κέρδους χάριν, 1:11; cf. μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, 1:7) but *unfit for any good work* (πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἀδόκιμοι, 1:16b). Whereas the speaker referred to Cretans as *evil beasts* (κακὰ θηρία; igr., *unclean*, 1:12), Paul used *having been defiled* (μεμιασμένοι, 1:15) and *detestable* (βδελυκτοὶ, 1:16) to refer to the troublemakers. Words for *clean [ones]* (καθαροῖς, 1:15) and cognates also contrast with such features of the quotation. Paul packed epithets that evoked central notions of Jewish religious purity into the passage. He compared and contrasted their actual behavior and speech with the insinuations levelled against the Cretans in the quotation. So, *bellies* and *brutes* (1:12), as metonyms, miscategorize their target and are more applicable to the speaker’s faction.¹⁹⁸ Paul, in turn, labelled them *defiled* (1:15) and *detestable* (1:16). He seems to have been accentuating a contradiction between the moral superiority implied in the condemnation of others and the actual moral condition of people who would purvey such ideas. I say more about this reversal when I develop a related theme (*Table-Turning*) in Chapter Two under *Literary Context*.

The hearer who infers such ironic speech appropriately receives tremendous payoff. By mentioning the quotation, Paul offered evidence for his hearers to judge even as he had to judge it. By use of echoic irony, Paul was able to carry his audience along better than direct and explicit argumentation, for he demonstrated trust that they would understand his message, which would yield his audience positive cognitive effects. Hearers who interpret irony well can derive a deeper connection with the speaker. I discuss such social outcomes of speech in Chapter Three—*The Non-Propositional Dimensions of Communication*.

A sentence uttered ironically, according to Wilson, “is more or less obviously false, irrelevant or under-informative.”¹⁹⁹ Paul distanced himself from the surface meaning of the quotation, just as would be expected of a person speaking ironically, and instead reversed its judgments back against its purveyors. Paul accomplished what Wilson describes as the

¹⁹⁸ See Song, “Metaphor and Metonymy,” 97–100.

¹⁹⁹ Wilson, “Pragmatics of Verbal Irony,” 1730–31. Writers commonly misspell *disassociate* and related words or confuse the meaning of this word with *dissociate*.

pragmatic function of irony: “the main point ... is to express the speaker’s dissociative [*sic*] attitude to a tacitly attributed utterance or thought ... based on some perceived discrepancy between the way it represents the world and the way things actually are.”²⁰⁰ Speaker intention has been a significant concern for this chapter, but one of RT’s major developments from pragmatics is a focus on utterance interpretation as a process in the *hearer’s* mind. In Chapter Two, we turn to *The Hearer’s Role in Communication*.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 1724 (again, the common misuse of *dissociate* when *disassociate* is meant).

Chapter Two – The Role of the Hearer in Communication

Relevance theorists focus on how hearers arrive at meaning. This focus is commensurate with the evolution of the discipline of linguistic pragmatics. Whereas Gricean Pragmatics is speaker-oriented, RT is hearer-oriented. This chapter spells out some of the implications of recognizing the hearer's role in communication for interpreting utterances and applies them to Titus.

Grice taught that when a hearer observes a superficial violation of the co-operative maxims (in his words, “flouting the maxims”), he nevertheless assumes the speaker's deeper adherence to them.¹ Levinson explains, “Grice's point is not that we [speakers] always adhere to these maxims on a superficial level but rather that, wherever possible, people will interpret what we say as conforming to the maxims on at least some level.”² Note the agency of the hearer in Levinson's explanation. Relevance theorists view interpretation as a cognitive process in the hearer. Furlong emphasizes the spontaneous and intuitive nature of the hearer's comprehension process as she contrasts RT with reader-response criticism.³ This contrast is important. Both hold the reader to be central to interpretation, but RT explains what readers contribute to an interpretive process that completes *speaker* intentions. Evaluating interpretations as valid or invalid cannot be the unilateral task of the reader; for, as Furlong notes, a reader “is not necessarily an authority on his own interpretive process.”⁴ So, the formulation of meaning is not entirely dependent upon the subjectivity of the hearer. The objective of uncovering speaker intention constrains the practice of inference in natural language exchanges.⁵ As Tim Meadowcroft points out, “reader responsibility” does not devolve into “unrestrained privilege.”⁶

Relevance theorists also hold that speakers do not utter sentences merely to convey information that hearers can ascertain through a process (be it ever so systematic and careful) of *comprehension*. Sperber and Wilson see *comprehension* as too passive and proposition-oriented to be the ultimate task of pragmatics. They write, “It is utterance-

¹ See “Logic and Conversation,” 53–54.

² Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 102–3.

³ See “Relevance Theory,” 43–46.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵ See Chapter One.

⁶ “Relevance as Mediating Category,” 627.

interpretation, not utterance-comprehension, that is the natural domain of pragmatic theory.”⁷ This distinction reflects RT’s development within pragmatics from a speaker- to a hearer-oriented explanation of communication. Relevance theorists recognize that hearers play an active, not a passive, role in formulating meaning. Hearer contribution, not just hearer competence, completes speaker intention and yields meaning.

Furthermore, speakers use utterances to accomplish effects in addition to and aside from comprehension. Speakers aim to alter their environments by affecting listener behavior and assumptions, social relations, and so forth.⁸ The interpretation of an utterance can be efficient and relevant, even when the informational payload of the utterance is somewhat indirect or equivocal from the perspective of a third party (e.g., modern readers). In this chapter, I explain two key aspects of the hearer’s role in communication and apply them to interpretations of Titus 1:12. First, I discuss *contextual assumptions*, which are comprised of a hearer’s cognitive environment (conceptual) and implicated premises (logical). Second, I discuss *salience*, which affects the relative prominence and accessibility of contextual assumptions.

I. Contextual Assumptions Mismatched between Ancient Audiences and Modern Readers

In the previous chapter, I explained that hearers infer explicatures based on observable linguistic features in a discourse context, especially what the speaker has produced (i.e., not the entire material environment). Explicatures must be combined with *contextual assumptions* in order to arrive at utterance meaning. Contextual assumptions, although largely shared between a speaker and a hearer, are the content a hearer contributes to inferential interpretation. That is, they are a necessary ingredient for interpretation that neither the words of a speaker nor the material environment, on their own, supply. Clark explains, “Explicatures, which are based on encoded linguistic meanings of linguistic expressions, plus contextual assumptions, which are based on life experience and the situational context of the conversation, combine to equal implicatures, which constitute the meaning of an utterance.”⁹

I will focus on two broad kinds of contextual assumptions—one conceptual and one logical. A hearer’s *cognitive environment* is a constantly-changing, complex, and

⁷ “Pragmatics” (1981), 283.

⁸ I discuss these non-propositional dimensions of communication in Chapter Three

⁹ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 141.

information-rich, albeit incomplete, conceptual world. *Implicated premises* are assumptions that are logically necessary to conclude the correct (i.e., relevant) meaning and derive adequate cognitive effects.

Clark provides a diagram that represents an objective and repeatable process, reproduced below (Figure 2).¹⁰ The schematic is especially helpful for meta-pragmatics—the process of interpreting utterances in which the interpreter is not a partner in the conversation (as when modern scholars read ancient texts)—because it illuminates the points at which third-party interpreters might diverge from original audiences by making inappropriate assumptions. Clark writes, “In meta-pragmatics, ... we imagine what might be available to an individual; and, of course, our model of the relevant set of contextual assumptions is radically impoverished compared to what is available to an actual individual at a specific time.”¹¹

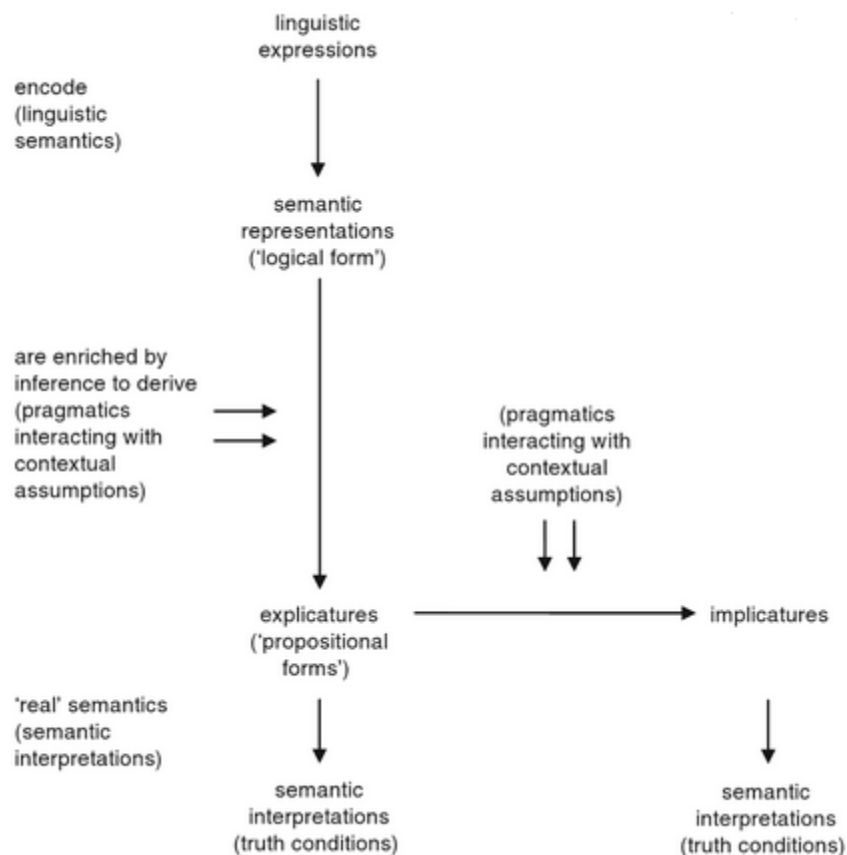


Figure 2: Graph from Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 299.

¹⁰ Ibid., 299.

¹¹ Ibid., 333.

Clark bases this diagram on Wilson and Sperber's arguments that pragmatic inference is not only necessary to arrive at implicatures, as Grice taught, but that it is also necessary for deriving explicatures, as the diagram portrays. As Sperber and Wilson explain, "a major development in pragmatics over the past thirty years (going much further than Grice envisaged) has been to show that the explicit content of an utterance, like the implicit content, is largely underdetermined by the linguistically encoded meaning, and its recovery involves a substantial element of pragmatic inference."¹² The most significant difference between this Relevance-theoretical outline and a more classic (Gricean) scheme is the presence of inference at all levels of the process. In this section, I focus on the center level of this diagram, where contextual assumptions contribute to arriving at both final utterance meaning (implicatures) and logically intermediate sentence meaning (explicatures). As stated before, explicatures are only *logically* intermediate; because processes of natural language interpretation occur so rapidly, intuitively, and virtually simultaneously that intermediate steps cannot be practically observed in a natural environment. For our purposes, however, this diagram helps to visualize the interplay of explicatures and contextual assumptions.

To discern the meaning of utterances, according to Sperber and Wilson, "implicated conclusions must be deducible from explicatures together with an appropriate set of contextual assumptions."¹³ Some prominent interpreters of Titus, however, have introduced anachronistic or otherwise inappropriate assumptions into the interpretational process. Because a disparaging statement appears in Titus 1:12b, they assume that Paul affirms the substance of the saying in spite of evidence in the broader context of Titus that he was trying to ameliorate ethno-religious tensions, especially those that diminished the dignity of Gentiles. In order to construe 1:12 as an insult levelled or endorsed by Paul, one must introduce assumptions that fail to cohere with the thrust of the letter as a whole or the sense of statements in the near context (1:10–16). I suggest that such a construal would have surprised original hearers. Blass recognizes the need for interpreters to grasp what was on the mind of original hearers, asserting, "The discourse analyst has to know some of the hearer's assumptions, no matter in what culture the analysis is done."¹⁴ I will now clarify how the contextual assumptions of original and modern interpreters can become

¹² "Pragmatics" (2007), 470.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 482.

¹⁴ *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 13.

mismatched and outline contextual assumptions that original hearers of Titus plausibly held. I begin with an explanation of how the hearer's cognitive environment contributes to these assumptions.

Cognitive Environment

A speaker expects her hearer to contribute what he already knows to the meaning of an utterance, and she signals which pieces of his store of knowledge are relevant. This subset of all of the hearer's knowledge is his *cognitive environment*. Clark provides the following definition: "The cognitive environment of an individual is a set of assumptions that are manifest to him."¹⁵ Whether an assumption is manifest depends upon various contextual factors—the utterance itself being one of the most important—but the test is whether the hearer "is capable at that time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true."¹⁶ Note that this definition implies that *cognitive environment* is particular to individual people at specific times and can never be fully replicated.¹⁷ It changes with every experience, word, and thought. In this section, I outline factors that contribute to an assumption being manifest. In order for readers of ancient writing to align their assumptions most reliably with those of original audiences, literary context is chief among these factors.

Consider the task of disambiguation. Modern readers of biblical texts can only properly disambiguate a reference, if the referent emerges from what could plausibly be construed as the original hearer's cognitive environment. If interpreters draw on information that is likely outside the cognitive environment of original hearers, they err.

To reconstruct a cognitive environment as it applies to interpreting the Cretan quotation of Titus 1:12, I proceed to outline three considerations: encyclopedic knowledge, constraints upon relevance, and literary context. I will progress through these considerations as they logically develop from one another. Encyclopedic knowledge is the complete set of available information. Constraints upon relevance limit this to a more

¹⁵ Clark adjusts Sperber and Wilson's definition by using *assumptions* in place of their *facts*. See *Relevance Theory*, 115. See also, Green, "Relevance Theory and Biblical Interpretation," 272.

¹⁶ Sperber and Wilson quoted in Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 115. Pattemore also builds upon Sperber and Wilson's definition, writing, "Context in RT is a cognitive concept—a set of propositions that we hold to be true or probably true. The sum of all such ideas is our *cognitive environment*." See Pattemore, "On the Relevance," 267.

¹⁷ Two relatively recent PhD dissertations apply RT to biblical studies to reconstruct the cognitive environment of ancient authors and audiences and, thus, to illuminate interpretation. Joseph D. Fantin examined specific passages in the undisputed Paulines, and Benson Goh examined Ephesians. See Fantin, "The Lord of the Entire World: Lord Jesus, a Challenge to Lord Caesar?" (PhD Diss., University of Sheffield, 2007); and Goh, "Honoring Christ, Subverting Caesar."

narrow, manageable, and accessible set for cognitive processing. Context is that most reliable, and therefore critical, subset for modern readers of the Bible. Green points out that *context* in RT is a subset of all the information available to hearers from their environment. The aspect of the original hearers' cognitive environment that modern readers have access to with the most detail is the text of Scripture.¹⁸

1. *Encyclopedic Knowledge*

A hearer's cognitive environment includes encyclopedic knowledge about the real world that differs for each individual. Biblical scholars study the ancient world and add to our store of knowledge but cannot predetermine what information is most relevant to a given utterance. Nothing guarantees beforehand that a certain historical, monumental, or literary fact will have relevance for a given context. Regarding both literary and social context, Blass writes, "It is a mistake to assume that context is something given in advance."¹⁹ We are always at risk of confusing our knowledge of the ancient world, especially ancient literature, monumental history, and archaeology, with the cognitive environment of ancient interlocutors. The hearer's cognitive environment, as a component of contextual assumptions, not only differs from person-to-person but also in one person from time-to-time. One's cognitive environment is indeed *contextual*.

Modern interpreters must evaluate the relevance of encyclopedic knowledge carefully. Original audiences had a nearly perfect set of contextual assumptions that modern readers could never duplicate. We acquire a surplus (but also a deficiency) of facts about the world, facts of history and human behavior, lexical and grammatical facts, social and religious facts. Green lists various categories and refers to this collection of facts as "all the information we need to process an utterance."²⁰ The hardest set of facts to ascertain—the holy grail of biblical studies—is the exact and detailed, local and momentary socio-historical situation of writing and reading. Grammars, lexicons, encyclopedias, archaeological digs, monographs, and other such apparatus of biblical scholarship are standard resources for building a scholar's encyclopedic knowledge of the ancient world. It will never be complete, and it will always be askew on the bases of the

¹⁸ See "Lexical Pragmatics and the Lexicon," 327. As Blass applies RT to a corpus of Sissala transcripts and refers to the contextual assumptions required to interpret meaning, she writes, "My analysis ... is not necessarily a representation of what was *actually thought* ... but how the interpretive process might have gone." See *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 13.

¹⁹ *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 41.

²⁰ "Lexical Pragmatics and the Lexicon," 327.

distorted perspective of monumental history and the arbitrary nature of archaeological discovery, not to mention editorial biases. This kind of study is still necessary, but a relevance-guided hermeneutic would counteract a false sense of confidence in general knowledge by prioritizing evidence drawn from linguistic context in evaluating relevance.

For biblical studies, canonical facts—i.e., how the canon portrays situations dealt with in biblical texts—are critical components of this encyclopedic background knowledge. Some PE scholars argue that this kind of knowledge is especially critical for these books, because they view their composition as predicated upon knowledge of the canonical Paul as a literary figure. Brevard S. Childs believes that the PE were written with a knowledge of the “canonical Paul” and that original audiences would have had this conception of Paul in mind. They, then, read and interpreted the PE in light of this preconception of Paul. In Childs’s words, “The Pauline corpus was further developed by the Pastoral Epistles, which actualized the normative role of Paul’s teachings in his apostolic witness to the gospel for the future generations of the Christian church.”²¹ In other words, these books rely on readers, even in the first instance, knowing the back-story of Paul and his companions, adventures, and concerns from previous encounters with writings that were already popular in first-century churches.

None of these sources of knowledge are new to biblical studies. They are a commonplace for various historical-critical approaches to interpretation. But, even as we attend to these sources of encyclopedic knowledge, RT helps us to understand the narrower subset of knowledge that is most pertinent to interpretation and how its boundaries are formed. The accumulated knowledge of modern datasets is not only a blessing but could also be a curse if modern scholars encumber interpretations with irrelevant data.²² So, we will now examine factors that constrain the relevance of encyclopedic knowledge so that hearers can process utterances economically.

2. Constraints of Relevance

Even though communication depends upon the contextual assumption of encyclopedic knowledge—basically an arbitrary, immeasurable, and ever-developing collection—natural language users are still able to comprehend one another. This is because relevance places

²¹ Brevard S. Childs, *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 192; see also discussion of PE in *ibid.*, 94–96. For a complementary *canonical* approach to the PE, see also Wall and Steele, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*.

²² E.g., Baugh, “Titus,” 502, 504; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 397–99.

several constraints upon what hearers can or do access. So, what hearers assume within a discourse is a subset of the immense store of knowledge theoretically at their disposal. I outline three main constraints upon relevance that theorists emphasize: 1) *mutuality* or shared knowledge, 2) *accessibility* or knowledge that requires the least effort to access, and 3) conversational *context*.²³ The third constraint includes two kinds of context—setting and discourse. The latter kind (discourse) mediates modern readers’ access to the former.²⁴ Therefore, I emphasize the importance of literary context.

a. Mutuality

Mutuality limits what hearers access from their store of encyclopedic knowledge to that which is shared between the speaker and the hearer. That is, if the knowledge is not shared, it does not yield a relevant assumption. A speaker judges which assumptions are needed on the basis of countless subtle evaluations, and she triggers assumptions accordingly. Her utterance is as lean as possible, adding to the conversational context only what is needed to accomplish her intentions and taking as many of the necessary contextual assumptions for granted as she can. This makes her speech efficient. The greater the familiarity between interlocutors, the more efficient the discourse and, consequently, the less comprehensible to outsiders. Karen H. Jobs suggests this calculus: “The higher the degree of communication intended by implication, the smaller the intended audience.”²⁵

It is important to grasp that the speaker forms her utterance on the basis of specific second-order assumptions about the hearer’s cognitive environment. Further, relevant assumptions are not just mutually known but *mutually manifest* and, therefore, possess a quality of second-order thinking. That is, each instance of communication depends upon both the speaker and hearer making assumptions about each other’s mind. The less the speaker judges the hearer to know, the more she feels obligated to say and *vice versa*.

Mutually held contextual assumptions can be numerous and subtle, and biblical interpreters must appreciate how heavily original interlocutors relied upon shared knowledge in order to understand one another. I will use a conversational example offered by Gibbs to illustrate this point:

²³ Some linguists also study neurological phenomena of language that doubtless have bearing upon the question of what constrains the knowledge that hearers access. I am not studying these phenomena directly.

²⁴ Goh sensitively gathers clues from the discourse of Ephesians in order to reconstruct the shared cognitive environment of author and audience. From this close examination of what was transparently on their minds, he is able to interpret passages in Ephesians with greater clarity. See “Honoring Christ,” 44–98.

²⁵ “Relevance Theory,” 790.

Joe: ‘Are you going to the big dance tonight?’

Sue: ‘Didn’t you hear that Billy Smith will be there?’²⁶

Semantically, Sue’s response holds no transparent relevance to Joe’s question, but the quest for relevance drives him to infer a meaning from which to derive adequate cognitive effects. Joe will have to use his knowledge of the meanings of words (lexicon) and their arrangement (grammar), how rhetorical questions work (conventional implicature), as well as encyclopedic knowledge of the real world, including his own situational context (location, schedule, personal acquaintances, etc.). But, all of this will not get him to Sue’s meaning if he does not grasp what Sue assumes to be common knowledge—namely, that she either dislikes Billy Smith and wants to avoid him or adores Billy Smith and would not miss the opportunity to be near him. If they both are right about the other’s assumptions concerning this question, Joe will access the correct assumption and arrive promptly at Sue’s intended meaning.

Sue’s *intention* goes beyond her *meaning* as I explain in Chapter Three on the non-propositional dimensions of communication. What she intends to do with her speech is more than to inform. In fact, if she assumes that Joe has heard that Billy Smith will be there, then she has not *informed* Joe of much at all. She has, however, entrusted Joe with sensitive knowledge, demonstrated familiarity, credited him with personal understanding, and other such relational outcomes.

Not just problematic passages but countless everyday interpretations of biblical texts exhibit a disjuncture between the contextual assumptions that ancient audiences brought to an utterance and those of modern audiences. Gibbs explains that a shared cognitive environment and attention to speaker intention is just as instrumental to the interpretation of written texts as they are to live speech:

Both forms of communication [speech and writing] can vary in their degree of contextualization. Certain kinds of oral language, such as formal speeches, assume little common ground information between speakers and addressees. Many forms of written discourse, such as private letters, presume a rich common ground between author and reader.²⁷

b. Access

A hearer’s cognitive environment is also constrained by the accessibility of encyclopedic knowledge. Several factors affect this access either negatively (e.g., distance in memory,

²⁶ “Intentionalist Controversy,” 186.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

multi-step processing, or obscurity) or positively (e.g., recency of mention, simplicity, or prominence). Tomoko Matsui has argued the congruence of scenario-based *activation* and relevance, and this relation helps us to understand how an utterance can stock a hearer's cognitive environment thereby increasing access to certain encyclopedic knowledge. Matsui argues that both activation and inference are required to interpret certain kinds of referential speech—namely, that which leaves an inferential gap to be “bridged.” Paul used this kind of speech in the context under investigation (Titus 1:10–16) when, for instance, he referred to those who were *unclean* and *defiled* (1:15). Paul's hearer's were able to bridge the semantic gap between these ideas and *beasts* (1:12); because, in the right scenario, each idea evoked religious valuations, as did *circumcision* (1:10) in the near context. This type of speech is called “bridging reference assignment.”²⁸

This bridging is especially common when a speaker draws upon a scenario that is either in encyclopedic knowledge or in long-term memory and calls upon assumptions of what belongs to that scenario. A restaurant will have its waiter; a skiing trip will have its snow.²⁹ Matsui argues that a speaker designs an utterance to draw on pre-existing scenarios of what the world is like and is able to use referents that the hearer can easily access using primary processing, which is immediate, rather than secondary processing, which is more time-consuming. Secondary processing involves going through the entire utterance again and expending more processing effort, but it takes place when primary processing fails for some reason. Primary processing typically does not fail for figurative speech, but it depends on the competency of both speakers and hearers. Below, under *Literary Context*, I will discuss scenarios (a.k.a. type-scenes) that Paul activates, thereby increasing his audience's access to certain contextual assumptions. But, first, I will outline the third constraint upon relevance—*Context*.

c. *Context*

Context particularizes the cognitive environment. It is difficult to think about anything but what a person is talking about. Ostensive inferential communication exercises a strong

²⁸ Tomoko Matsui highlights a distinction between herself and Clark, who claims that a hearer makes an inferential bridge to assign a referent rather than having the idea activated immediately. This is a minor distinction, but Matsui's explanation seems appropriate to natural language interpretation; because, as she argues, it requires less processing effort. See “Assessing a Scenario-Based Account of Bridging Reference Assignment,” *RTAI* (1998): 123–58, at 123.

²⁹ *Snow* and *waiter* come from Matsui's illustrations of pragmatic activation: “I went to a French restaurant. The waiter was very sexy ... Harry fell several times. He didn't like skiing at all. The snow was cold and wet.” See “Assessing a Scenario-Based Account,” 123.

influence upon what portion of a hearer's encyclopedic knowledge he will access. Because every context differs, utterances place unique constraints of relevance upon this vast set of ideas. Green explains, "Context is not a preset and well-defined body of information but, rather, consists of all the information that is relevant for the interpretation of a particular utterance. As such, context is a psychological construct."³⁰ Two broad types of context have bearing—*social* and *discursive*. As modern readers have profoundly limited access to the exact social situations of biblical writers and their audiences, the most reliable source of evidence for ascertaining their cognitive environment is the discursive context which serves the double-duty of also illuminating the social.³¹

Lexicons, grammars, atlases, and histories are common tools of biblical interpretation, and every generation introduces additional resources to the panoply. Such resources provide a glimpse into the original interlocutors' cognitive environment, particularly encyclopedic knowledge, but this general knowledge must be constrained and adjusted by relevance. A book's discursive context exercises this fundamental constraint. What is in the context is likely to be on the mind. Considerations of relevance govern and constrain which facts about the ancient world and what information concerning lexemes and syntax are applicable within a conversational context. Gibbs writes, "The context for understanding verbal discourse lies within the set of beliefs, knowledge and presuppositions that speakers/authors and listeners/readers mutually share."³² Literary context is the most important indicator available to biblical scholars of what constitutes this mutually shared cognitive environment. As eavesdroppers, modern readers must infer utterance meaning on the basis of reconstructed contextual assumptions. So, because a careful examination of literary context is the most reliable means for modern readers to discern what was in the cognitive environment of original audiences, I now detail specific evidence as it influences the interpretation of Titus 1:12.³³

3. *Literary Context (Macro and Micro)*

Discourse itself indicates which contextual assumptions are relevant. As Clark explains, "Contextual assumptions used in understanding an utterance need not be known to the

³⁰ "Relevance Theory and Biblical Interpretation," 268.

³¹ Furlong interchanges (as I do at times) *context* with the Relevance-theoretical designation *contextual assumptions*. See "Relevance Theory," 60–63.

³² "Intentionalist Controversy," 186.

³³ Blass cites several other scholars as she argues this point. She establishes the more objective nature of reconstructing contextual assumptions on the basis of literary context rather than on subjective third-party assumptions. See *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 13.

hearer before the utterance is produced.”³⁴ Yael Klangwisan explains that the “mutual cognitive environment” is a context that “evolves as the text unfolds.” In other words, the text is the reader’s guide to relevance.³⁵ Literary context is the most reliable evidence modern readers have for reconstructing the cognitive environment of ancient readers, especially with a text whose *Sitz im Leben* is uncertain or contentious. I will delineate two aspects of literary context: *Structural* and then *Thematic and Topical*.

a. *Structural*

The literary context of Titus is our access point to discerning meaning at the level of *what is said*, and structure is the first fundamental feature of literary context that we will examine.³⁶ Below, I outline logical and topical divisions of Titus, its book-level units and their relation to one another. I also demonstrate that 1:5–16 has a unified theme and that observable boundary-making features signal the section’s beginning, ending, and internal shifts. Throughout, I explain how this structure influences the interpretation of 1:12. In Table 1, I present a summary, comparison, and analysis of the logical structures ascribed to Titus by a handful of prominent PE scholars.³⁷

³⁴ *Relevance Theory*, 226.

³⁵ *Earthing the Cosmic Queen*, 24.

³⁶ “What is said” is Grice’s semi-technical term for the explicit, linguistically-encoded content of an utterance. See, e.g., Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” 44.

³⁷ I have tried to represent diverse and influential commentators, but some do not give ample attention to structure. E.g., Huizenga’s outline for Titus follows: Ch. 1 “Rungs on the Social Ladder,” Ch. 2 “Staying in Your Place,” Ch. 3 “Orderliness Is Next to Godliness.” The titles are pithy and clever but do not illuminate the letter’s logic as much as locate objectionable material for readers. See *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, viii. Attention to a letter’s native structure enables one to grasp a writer’s message. The table is not to scale.

Barrett, Pastoral Epistles, 37	1:1-4 Address	1:5-16 Development of Christian Work in Crete	2:1-3:2 The Way of Christian Obedience (subdivided as 2:1-8; 2:9-10; and 2:11-3:2)	3:3-11 Salvation	3:12-15 Personal Conclusion
Bassler, 1 Timothy, 9	1:1-4 Salutation	1:5-9 Appointment of Elders	2:1-15 Instructions for various groups (subdivided as 2:1-10 Exhortations proper; 2:11-15 Doctrinal foundations for exhortations)	3:1-8 Instructions for the church (subdivided as 3:1-2 Exhortations proper; 3:3-8 Doctrinal foundations for exhortations)	3:12-15 Travel arrangements and greetings
		1:10-16 Warnings about rebellious people	2:1-15 Teaching for the church – how believers are to relate to one another	3:9-11 Final exhortations concerning opponent	3:12-14 Personal instructions
Marshall, Critical and Exegetical, ix, 24 (Table 6)	1:1-4 Opening salutation	1:5-16 The appointment of elders and the danger from opponents	2:1-15 Teaching for the church – how believers are to relate to one another	3:1-11 Teaching for the church – how believers are to live in society	3:15 Closing greeting
Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, cxxxvi	1:1-4 Salutation	1:5-9 Qualities necessary for church leadership	2:1-3:11 Instructions and theological basis for godly behavior (subdivided as 2:1-10 Instructions; 2:11-15 Theological basis; and 3:1-11 Continued call)	3:12-15 Final Greeting	
		1:10-16 Description of the problem in Crete	2:1-3:11 To the Church	3:12-14 Personal Notes	3:15 Final Greetings and Benediction
Towner, Letters to Timothy and Titus, xii	1:1-4 Opening	1:5-16 To Titus			

Table 1

As Andreas J. Köstenberger puts it, “The various proposals regarding the structure of Titus ... reveal a certain amount of consensus.”³⁸ My own outline of Titus (Table 2) is not innovative. It recognizes as major divisions 1:1–4, 1:5–16, 2:1–15, 3:1–11, and 3:12–15. Few would disagree with the main contours of the outline I present.

<i>Titus 1:1–3:15</i>				
1:1–4— Epistolary Opening, Testimony, and Greeting	1:5–3:11 Main Body—“straighten out what remains and appoint elders” (1:5)			3:12–15— Epistolary Closing, Travelogue, and Greeting
	1:5–16—Particular instructions regarding leaders; the contrast between good (5–9) and bad (10–16)	2:1–15—Particular instructions for several specific household categories within the church (1–10) with substantiation (11–15) and λάλει inclusio (1, 15)	3:1–11—General and substantiatory instructions for all Christians	

Table 2

Discourse features in the Greek text reinforce these major breaks in Titus. The body (1:5–3:11) begins after a relatively substantial salutation (1:1–4) with the standard features of a Greco-Roman epistolary opening. The break between 1:4 and 1:5 is clear based on the conclusion of the salutatory blessing (1:4b), the topicalization affected by the left-dislocation of 1:5a (*This is the reason I left you in Crete*, Τούτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτη), and the topical resumption of the following ἵνα clause (*in order that*, 1:5b). The contextual features that denote the coherence of 1:5–16 include the overarching topic of leadership problems, the complementary nature of paragraph subtopics (i.e., leadership, good and bad), and the logical connection marked by the conjunction γάρ (*for*, 1:10). Let me describe these features of the section in more detail.

First, the theme of addressing leadership problems holds this section together. On the one hand, 1:5–9 portrays a vacuum of good leadership that Titus must fill by sanctioning leaders of impeccable character. On the other hand, 1:10–16 portrays the harmful influence of people who have presumed the prerogatives and social position of leaders but without proper accountability, scruples, or healthy doctrine. Whereas Paul instructs Titus to deal with the broader church population under the rubric of a household code in 2:1–10; in the present section, Paul addresses leadership as a discrete issue. Not only the whole but also the parts of 1:5–16 address specific leadership-related matters; thus, any interpretation should make clear how each piece, including the Cretan quotation, correlates to this obvious concern.

³⁸ Köstenberger, “Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges,” 15.

Second, the two pericopes that comprise 1:5–16 describe two kinds of leaders by contrasting them along corresponding lines. The following list of features is not exhaustive, but it demonstrates thematic coherence—a continuous concern for good and bad leaders and what to do about them:

- Paul said that a good leader’s children should not be prone to the accusation of being *insubordinate* (ἀνυπότακτα, 1:6), then his first accusation toward the presumptive leaders was of being *insubordinate* (ἀνυπότακτοι, 1:10).
- Maintaining the household theme, Paul instructed Titus that elders were to *have faithful children* (τένκα ἔχων πιστά, 1:6), then he referred to the troublemakers as *faithless* (ἀπίστοις, 1:15).
- Whereas Paul compared an elder to *God’s household steward* (θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, 1:7), he accused the troublemakers of *disrupting entire households* (ὅλους οἴκους ἀνατρέπουσιν, 1:11).
- Good leaders, among other things, were not to crave *shameful gain* (μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, 1:7), but *for the sake of shameful gain* (αἰσχροῦ κέρδους χάριν, 1:11) was precisely why the troublemakers took up leadership roles.
- Whereas Titus’s elders were appointed *in order to engage in teaching* (διδαχὴν ... ἵνα ... διδασκαλία, 1:9), the main disruption in Crete resulted from the troublemakers’ *teaching* (διδάσκοντες, 1:11).
- Whereas good elders were to hold to the doctrine of the *faithful word* (πιστοῦ λόγου, 1:9), the troublemakers were *empty[-word]-speakers* (ματαιολόγοι, 1:10).
- One of the chief responsibilities of properly sanctioned leaders was to *rebuke* (ἐλέγχειν, 1:9) *those who contradict*; and the first opportunity in the letter to do so came after the quotation, where Paul told Titus to *rebuke* (ἔλεγε, 1:13) *them sternly*.
- Sanctioned leaders needed to be able to encourage the church *in healthy teaching* (ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ, 1:9), and the hope for duly corrected troublemakers was *that they might be healthy in the faith* (ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει, 1:13).
- Paul’s final, biting judgment against the troublemakers starkly contrasted with the *love for good* (φιλόγαθον, 1:8) that elders were to exhibit; he said that such menaces denied God by their *works* (ἔργοις, 1:16) and were themselves *unfit for every good work* (πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἀδόκιμοι, 1:16).

These correlations should suffice to demonstrate the strong complementary nature of these two pericopes (1:5–9 and 1:10–16). Each deliberate point of comparison illuminates the meaning of its counterpart.

Third, the conjunction γάρ (1:10) marks a clear logical relationship between the two pericopes (1:5–9 and 1:10–16). I call this relationship *hortatory substantiation* after Bauer and Traina.³⁹ In other words, the material governed by γάρ (likely 1:10–12) is the reason that Paul presents for his prior instructions (1:5–9). The conjunction γάρ can govern a small or large amount of material from a single clause or sentence to a paragraph. Here, it

³⁹ See *Inductive Bible Study*, 107.

seems to be connecting multiple verses. The presence of these troublemakers and their activity (1:10–12) are the explicit bases for placing elders of Paul’s description in each town (1:5–9). In Titus, γάρ marks logical relationships between units that begin at 1:7, 10; 2:11; 3:3, 9, and 12. It always accompanies an argument in which the reason comes after some critical instruction.⁴⁰ I will now discuss three structural-contextual issues with the interpretation of Titus.

i. Structure-Based Mismatch

The general consensus on the simplicity of Titus does not prevent interpreters from making structure-based errors. Preconceptions regarding structure can introduce mismatches between the contextual assumptions of ancient and modern readers. The NRSV, for instance, places an editorial division between the quotative frame of 1:12a and the quotation proper of 1:12b, but this break is misleading. Separating the quotation from the rest of the text presumes that Paul deferred to its authority, but this choice obscures evidence that he critiques it.

In the Greek text upon which the NIV is based, a major editorial paragraph break begins after 1:12a. The Cretan quotation appears in a separate paragraph that divorces 1:12b–16 from its literary context and obscures the strong logical development, thematic unity, and other connecting tissue of the larger section on good and bad leaders (1:5–16).⁴¹ No objectively discerned boundary of the passage suggests a strong break where the NIV Greek text places it. Although the English translation of the NIV does not carry this peculiar formatting forward, it makes perhaps an even more egregious embellishment by translating the quotative frame εἶπέν τις ἐξ αὐτῶν ἴδιος αὐτῶν προφήτης as “One of Crete’s own prophets has said it” (1:12a). The NIV’s translation philosophy notwithstanding, this sentence seems more influenced by the history of interpretation than by the language of the passage.

The NIV translates ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη ἐστὶν ἀληθής as “This saying is true” (1:13a). In English, *said* and *saying* are cognate, but the underlying Greek words—εἶπέν (1:12) and μαρτυρία (1:13), as they appear in the text—have quite different roots and senses. The NLT translates this Greek sentence, “This is true;” and Eugene H. Peterson’s *The Message*

⁴⁰ The conjunction γάρ appears less frequently in Titus than δέ (1:1, 3, 15, 16; 2:1; 3:4, 9, 14) and ἵνα (1:5, 9, 13; 2:4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14; 3:7, 8, 13, 14), which tend to govern smaller portions of material and, of course, with their own nuances.

⁴¹ See Richard J. Goodrich and Albert L. Lukaszewski, eds., *A Reader’s Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

has “He certainly spoke the truth.”⁴² Each of these translations obscures both pragmatic and semantic features of the underlying Greek sentence in order to sustain an assumption that derives from the history of interpretation and not from the text itself. Relevance-guided biblical interpretation detects such mismatches and constructively illuminates texts through careful contextual observation. I base the remaining two structural-contextual points on such observation.

ii. Leaders and Leadership Malpractice

Paul instructed Titus to vigorously address leadership problems within the Cretan church throughout Titus 1:5–16, so an appropriate interpretation of 1:12 should demonstrate how the Cretan quotation is contextually relevant to this general intention. Two paragraphs comprise the unit—1:5–9, which concerns the appointing and qualification of good leaders, and 1:10–16, which concerns the presumptive leaders who disrupt the church in various ways, for various reasons, and with various results. Under the influence of a *prima facie* reading, it is difficult to see how the Cretan quotation fits into this otherwise coherent discussion. Thorvald B. Madsen, II surprisingly limits the leadership section of Titus to 1:5–11, supposing the Cretan quotation to belong to the section that addresses the general church population. This choice is mistaken for reasons I have already presented, but also because Madsen is not consistent. He says that the rebukes of 1:14–15 are aimed at the “would-be apostles” (presumptive leaders), but this claim ignores the structural boundary he indicated for the passages.⁴³

Reconstructing the audience’s cognitive environment must take into account this context of leadership problems. Paul described the church’s problems and the troublemakers’ actions in terms of leadership. For example, they lead, though astray (*misleader*, φρεσπατίας, 1:11a); they teach, albeit wrongly (*teaching that which [they] ought not*, διδάσκοντες ἃ μὴ δεῖ, 1:11b) and with wrong motives (*for the sake of shameful gain*, αἰσχροῦ κέρδους χάριν, 1:11c); and they make value judgments between persons, even when wrongly justified (*Cretans [are] always liars*, Κρηῖτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται, 1:12; cf. *confession ... denying*, ὁμολογοῦσιν ... ἄρνοῦνται, 1:16). Exemplifying the *prima facie* reading, Barrett assumes that Paul was concerned with Cretan reprobation more than leadership malpractice. He misidentifies the source and nature of the problem, writing,

⁴² *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003).

⁴³ See “The Ethics of the Pastoral Epistles,” *EG*, 219–40, at 225–226.

“Opposition ... exists, arising partly out of the notoriously bad character of the Cretans themselves.”⁴⁴ Barrett identifies “Jewish gnostics” as the other source of opposition.⁴⁵ Evidence in Titus is probably too ambiguous to support the identification of a specific group. The divisions the presumptive leaders were causing troubled Paul, not their proto-gnosticism, Jewishness, or ethnicity *per se*. A better case can be made that disruptions of the Christian mission in Crete, rather than supposed Cretan notoriety, prompted Paul’s concerns. Some scholars have shown that the PE are concerned with the respectable behavior of Christians as a lifestyle *apologia*.⁴⁶ This being the case, the Cretans are not especially notorious, because Paul evidently is just as concerned with the morality of the Ephesian churches that Timothy oversees. Paul’s concern with behavior does not explain why he would endorse a quotation that denotes the Cretans as incorrigible. The claim that the Cretan quotation advances the cause of positive public testimony ignores its immediate context within a leadership discussion and its book context in which Paul shows almost no concern to address issues of laziness or gluttony.

Later in Titus, Paul speaks explicitly of a *divisive person* or *heretic* (αἰρετικός 3:10); but the issue of division stems from presumptive leadership, which he addresses here (1:10–16). The actions and attributes ascribed to Cretans by the quotation are not heretical (lit. *divisive*), but the behaviors of the troublemakers are. Among the most divisive could be this slur against the Cretans, accusing them of overall reprobation. The three epithets of this quotation could be considered a synecdoche for general reprobation and worthlessness, highlighting various aspects of corruption—speech (*liars*, ψεῦσται), being (*evil*, κακά), and action (*unworking*, ἀργαί). It is indeed tremendously offensive and literally dehumanizing (*beasts*, θηρία). Paul enjoins rebuke (1:13) in a context where, although he does not yet name *heresy*, he nevertheless identifies aspects of bad leadership that have dimensions of heresy (i.e., causing divisions). He thus describes *misleaders* (1:10), *upsetting whole households* (1:11), *contradicting* (1:9; cf. 2:15), and *attending to Jewish myths and commandments of people who abandon the truth* (1:14; cf. 3:11).⁴⁷ The divisiveness was not theoretical, but social, yielding a framework of superiority and inferiority. The base moral delinquency expressed in the quotation was not the cause of

⁴⁴ *Pastoral Epistles*, 127.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ See Hoklotubbe, *Civilized Piety*; Kidd, “Titus as Apologia.”

⁴⁷ Based on this outline of leadership malpractice, Paul offered more detail concerning problems (i.e., heresy) in Crete than commentators generally acknowledge.

division. The act of attributing such reprobation to Cretans by spreading this slur against Gentiles in Titus's congregation, however, was highly divisive. It called for a *stern rebuke* (ἔλεγγε ... ἀποτόμως, 1:13b) precisely in alignment with Paul's concern about leadership malpractice.

Leaders were *de facto* teachers, and teachers were *de facto* leaders. Problems with speech were problems with leadership and *vice versa*. Paul described the troublemakers' behavior and its consequences in speech-related terms. Huizenga observes that disruptive speech was their central behavior: "[Paul] describes their behavior in several strongly negative ways; in particular he condemns their speaking and teaching for 'upsetting whole families.'"⁴⁸ Harmful speech was the very problem that Paul identified as characteristic of the presumptive leaders whom he called *empty-talkers and deceivers ... whose mouths must be stopped* (1:10-11). This description raises the question, *What were they saying that was so objectionable?* Paul answers by quoting what *someone said* (εἶπέν τις, 1:12a). There was an integral connection between speech and leadership in the church. The troublemakers are not vicious in a generic moral sense; their disruptions (*upsetting entire households*, 1:11) constituted leadership malpractice. In such a context, Paul exposed one of their most disruptive, divisive, and misleading declarations—the Cretan quotation (1:12b).

Assuming that Paul affirms the *prima facie* meaning of the quotation seems to entail a significant, unexplainable literary-contextual interruption. In an otherwise logical and cohesive discussion of leadership issues in Crete (e.g., divisiveness, evil speech, and presumptive leadership malpractice), Paul supposedly rails against the general Cretan populace. Such a disruption might betoken an interpolation, but no textual support for one currently exists. The *prima facie* interpretation virtually requires one to see it as a tangent of some sort, rather than as pertinent to Paul's argument. Towner writes, "The citation of the Cretan saying is almost an aside, and at first glance it appears primarily to disparage the Jewish-Christian teachers. Indeed, it does this; but ... [such] Cretan echoes ... also prepare the way ... to engage the Cretan social-religious world."⁴⁹ Such assumptions do not solve the problem of how it functions within its paragraph context, which, internal rupture aside, coheres well with the book context and the rhetorical development of Titus. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume, instead, that Paul's use of the Cretan quotation is relevant

⁴⁸ 1-2 Timothy, Titus, 138.

⁴⁹ Letters to Timothy and Titus, 699.

to the context. Paul did not change the topic of 1:5–16 when he presented the quotation. The pronouns that he used to introduce it seem to refer to the presumptive leaders.⁵⁰

Recognizing the straightforward structure of Titus, it seems out-of-place for Paul either to abruptly disparage the Cretans or to raise moral issues such as gluttony and laziness that he would not address in greater detail later on. Additionally, a couple of the topics are not even morally specific but simply slurs about existential attributes (e.g., *evil*, *brutish*, 1:12b).⁵¹ It is no wonder that many careful scholars have wrestled with this passage’s coherence. The Cretan quotation does not need to be read as an interruption, however. Paul was addressing a leadership issue in the Cretan church. A number of presumptive individuals had emerged in Titus’s missionary congregation, and Paul instructed him to appoint the right kind of leaders and to rebuke the wrong kind of leaders while identifying particular problems. Madsen describes the problem that the epistle envisages: “Several would-be apostles—or, at any rate, several aspiring VIPs—have risen up with eccentric doctrines and practices that efface the gospel and factionalize the churches.”⁵² The third point of structure that I outline, *Table-Turning*, concerns one of Paul’s corrective strategies.

iii. Table-Turning

Within the paragraph that focuses on bad leaders (1:10–16), Paul appears to echo themes from the Cretan quotation in order to characterize the troublemakers instead. Towner observes, “These teachers (hyperbolically) embody all that is deplorable in Cretan culture.”⁵³ He is right about the thematic echoes in Paul’s critique of the troublemakers, but he takes for granted that Paul accepts the quotation as an apt description of the Cretans as opposed to a vicious stereotype. In Chapter One, I outlined various ways that Paul turned the troublemakers’ insults back upon them under *Category Reversal*. Here, I specifically address how this rhetorical maneuver affects structure and context.

⁵⁰ Henry Swete comments, “At first sight,” ἐξ αὐτῶν appears to refer to οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς. He does not say why he dismisses this possibility. See Theodore, *Commentary* (1882), comments at Titus 1:10–12. Jerome also intuitively identified the speaker of the quotation with those *especially of the circumcision*. Following Clement of Alexandria, however, he attributed the quotation to Epimenides, Crete’s most famous poet. See Jerome, *Commentaries*, comments at Titus 1:10–12.

⁵¹ Faber attempts to show how Paul developed these themes throughout the letter. He may not fully convince, but he demonstrates the ingenuity required to see the moral issues raised by the quotation as significant concerns for Paul. See “‘Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons,’” 135–45.

⁵² “Ethics of the Pastoral Epistles,” 225.

⁵³ *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 703.

Paul's original readers were cognizant of the ethno-religious nature of the contentions in Crete and thus would not have been oblivious to the irony of the associations Paul made. Grasping the significance of these conceptual associations for Crete's Jewish Christians (1:10, 14) in particular is critical for modern readers. Paul exposed the ones who called the Cretans *liars* (ψεύστης, 1:12b) and characterized them as *people who reject the truth* (ἀληθεία, 1:14). He prepared original readers with his epistolary greeting where *truth* (ἀληθεία, 1:1) and *un-lying* (ἀψευδής, 1:2) appear in reference to Paul's message and God. Whereas the troublemakers regarded the Cretans with disdain as *evil beasts* (κακὰ θηρία, 1:12b), which has implications of uncleanness, Paul said that it was rather *to the defiled* (μιαίνω) and *faithless* that *nothing is clean* (1:15) and that these troublemakers, barring restoration (1:13b), were *detestable* or *abominable* (βδελυκτός, 1:16). Compare the use of μιαίνω in Deut 21:22–23, a passage that the Apostle Paul demonstrated his familiarity with in Gal 3:13. The same concept of defilement appears in Titus 1:15. I say, *barring restoration*, because restoration seems to have been the goal (*in order that they may be healthy*, ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν, 1:13b); that is, Paul's intent was not to leave the troublemakers in their depraved condition.

Instances of βδελυκτός (*detestable*) in the LXX illuminate the thrust of Paul's use in Titus 1:16.⁵⁴ In the prayer of Jonathan, Nehemiah, and the returned exiles (2 Macc 1:23–30, esp. 1:27), βδελυκτός labelled diaspora Jews who had been subject to Gentile rule as a result of judgment. This usage suggests that the designation would have evoked negative ethno-religious associations. Paul fittingly evoked Jewish wisdom topics as well. Proverbs 17:15 (LXX) exhibits a striking conceptual analogy: *whoever judges the righteous [to be] unrighteous or the unrighteous [to be] righteous is unclean* (ἀκάθαρτος) and *detestable* (βδελυκτός) *before God*. In addition to sharing critical lexemes with the proverb, Titus 1:15–16 also echoes the conceptual predicate structure of judgment upon someone who pronounces that which is righteous and clean to be *evil* (κακά, 1:12b). As far as Cretans are concerned generally, the ensuing discourse views them as made *righteous* and *clean* (2:11–15 and 3:3–7, esp. δικαίως in 2:12 and καθάριση in 2:14; cf. λουτροῦ in 3:5). Now that we have looked at some ways that literary structure shaped the audience's cognitive environment, we turn to the influence of themes and topics.

⁵⁴ The Apostle Paul used a cognate participle to refer to his fictional interlocutor's assumed attitude of abhorring idols (ὁ βδελυσσόμενος τὰ εἰδωλα, Rom 2:22).

b. *Thematic and Topical*

In addition to literary structure, thematic and topical aspects of context influence an audience's cognitive environment. Linguists do not always or consistently distinguish between theme and topic.⁵⁵ For the sake of clarity, I use *topic* to refer to what the speaker is talking about—the matter at-hand, even when expressed in figurative language.⁵⁶ I use *theme* to refer to the way the speaker is talking about it. A theme represents an implicit association that the speaker makes between various topics and higher-order schemas. Themes can be real-life or imaginary overlays that speakers apply across topics to make implicit conceptual connections. A theme structures information by implying relationships between things. It places multiple semantic components in relation to one another over portions of material. The semantic values of words, phrases, and sentences do not themselves convey themes. Themes cross boundaries between the semantically given and the pragmatically inferred. Semantic representations do, however, signal topics, which require less inferential processing effort to recognize but yield fewer cognitive effects. Some overlap exists between these categories of context. Themes and topics both shape and are shaped by their context dialectically; they are not disconnected ideas.

With regard to the linguistic function of topics, María Gómez-González describes two major perspectives. First, some linguists argue that any supposed function of language (in this case, topicality) must have corresponding formal features whereby it can be recognized. Second, others argue that topicality is required for comprehension; thus, it is intrinsic to language and will be present with or without formal indicators.⁵⁷ Relevance theorists, coming from a cognitive linguistic perspective, tend to favor the second view; but several linguists, and especially discourse analysts, try to identify formal clues that frequently signal topics. These approaches are not absolute or mutually exclusive, as I will show.

⁵⁵ The scholarly ambivalence about differentiating these terms does not reflect disagreement at the philosophical level. First, linguists divide material along different conceptual lines, calling for different terms. Second, these terms (and others that have been proposed) and the concepts themselves are vague or multivalent. Runge, for example, regards *theme* as the given part of information structure, whereas *rheme* is newly asserted, focus information; he uses *topic*, however, in a less technical sense as whatever the speaker talks about. See *Discourse Grammar*, 200–201. María Gómez-González writes, “Studies in this area have been characterised by terminological profusion and confusion because very different positions have been taken on the appropriate criteria for the definition and identification of the notions of Theme/Topic.” See *The Theme-Topic Interface: Evidence from English*, P&B 71 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2001), 4.

⁵⁶ Some object that the convenient term *topic* is too vague to be useful. Blass writes, “The notion of topic has no adequate theoretical definition and should therefore be dispensed with in theoretical accounts of textuality and comprehension.” See *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, 41.

⁵⁷ See Gómez-González, *Theme-Topic Interface*, 12–13.

The topics and themes identified below are prominent regardless of specific formal criteria; but they are typically accompanied, if not signaled, by recognizable features. These features include the presence of multiple words that activate the same type-scene or conceptual frame; the simple recurrence of lexemes, cognates, synonyms, and antonyms; left-dislocation and resumption; and subject-predicate order reversal, which is a marked construction.⁵⁸ I will introduce and explain each of these features as they pertain to the specific topics and themes that I name below. First, I explain what is meant by type-scene or conceptual frame activation.

Type-scene activation (a.k.a. *frame semantics*, *frame* or *scenario evocation*, and *conceptual frame activation*) makes it possible for hearers to grasp specific meanings of ambiguous words (a.k.a. bridging reference assignment), because it allows for narrow contextual comprehension of words without lengthy qualifications.⁵⁹ Such activation can be used with any degree of literality or figurativeness. Unfortunately, because of the economy of type-scene activation, it is quite possible for non-original audiences to activate the incorrect conceptual frame or not to activate one at all, which leads either to a failure of comprehension or a non-relevant interpretation.

Mike Borkent provides a succinct definition of *frame semantics*. He writes that frames include “the broad experiential knowledge necessary for understanding even simple words, since a frame is ‘any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits.’”⁶⁰

The cognitive linguistic notion of *frame activation* is crucial for understanding the role of themes and topics in interpretation. Words can *activate* entire conceptual worlds when they are used within the signaling environment established by a genre. As Barbara Dancygier writes, “Linguistic expressions prompt conceptualizations.”⁶¹ These conceptualizations may be referred to as *frames*, but they are not static and are themselves subject to pragmatic adjustment. No one can predetermine which components of a frame

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 15–16. This list of formal features that accompany (or signal) theme and topic corresponds to various conceptual approaches to theme and topic function. For example, left-dislocation is syntactic while recurrence is semantic, and type-scene or frame activation organizes information.

⁵⁹ Barbara Dancygier, José Sanders, and Lieven Vandelanotte explain, “As cognitive linguists point out, the meaning of an expression owes as much to the specific semantics of the lexical items used as to the meanings prompted through syntactic form and frame evocation.” See “Textual Choices in Discourse,” *TCD*, 185–86. See also Matsui, “Assessing a Scenario-Based Account.”

⁶⁰ Mike Borkent, “Illusions of Simplicity,” *TCD*, 5–24, at 9. He quotes, in part, from Charles J. Fillmore’s “Frame Semantics” in *Linguistics in the Morning Calm* (Seoul: Hanshin, 1982), 111–37.

⁶¹ *The Language of Stories: A Cognitive Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 19.

are necessarily present in the cognitive environment of a listener once a word is spoken, but the conversational context is key to uncovering which aspects of the frame are crucial.

Depending on context, the single word *yard*, for example, can also activate the conception of *house*, *grass*, and *fence*—all of which may be necessary for understanding a particular use of *yard*. However, if a speaker mentions *field*, then *house*, for instance, is not automatically activated, even though in some instances *yard* and *field* are synonymous. When a speaker mentions the word *restaurant*, then *wait staff*, *tables*, *chairs*, *kitchen*, and so forth enter the listener’s cognitive environment. She can then use generic verbs and nouns (e.g., *bus*, *tub*, *tip*, *order*, *check*, *wait*) in a sentence but still be understood in a very specific sense, because these more ambiguous words have relevance to the frame that she has activated. Type-scene activation allows a speaker to use language more efficiently by invoking specific components of a type-scene or conceptual frame and relying on the hearer to conceptualize relevant aspects from a bank of encyclopedic knowledge about the world. Jobs points out that frames can differ across cultures, and she explains some implications for translating Scripture: “simply plugging in the equivalent words more often than not will fail to preserve the implicatures intended by the original language to the extent that the cultural frames of the original audience differ from those of the target audience.”⁶²

Linguists commonly use the frame of commercial transfer as an example: A hearer cannot comprehend the word *buy* without understanding the interactions of people involved in commercial transfer. Thus, Charles J. Fillmore, who introduced Frame Semantics, argues that using a single word (e.g., *buy*) often activates a cluster of other ideas and associations that are necessary for interpreting the word.⁶³ Empirical studies of mind modularity have shown that related ideas are activated together for natural language speakers so that recall time is measurably decreased for words related by a conceptual frame.⁶⁴ Further, the words used to activate a given frame can also indicate which perspective the speaker is favoring. For instance, a speaker’s choice to use *buy* instead of *sell* to describe a transaction that intrinsically involved both actions expresses her wish to favor the perspective of the buyer, rather than the seller (not that other options must always occur to the speaker).

⁶² “Relevance Theory,” 789.

⁶³ As explained in Dancygier, *Language of Stories*, 32–33.

⁶⁴ See discussion of studies of cognition and Fodorian mind modularity in Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 91–97, 346–49.

Our examination of Titus will intersperse several themes and topics in a sequence and level of detail commensurate with how they illuminate each other. Each one is critical for appreciating how context shaped the audience's cognitive environment. We will start with the thematic frame of a courtroom that Paul activated with its related topics.

i. Courtroom

In the first chapter of Titus, several words and information structures suggest that Paul was activating the type-scene of a courtroom. He uses words from a juridical domain (e.g., *testimony, true, accusation, convict*, 1:13; *confess, deny* in 1:16) and structures information forensically. The sequence establishes both his own and the troublemakers' character (1:1–4, 10–11), makes an accusation (1:12), swears an oath (1:13a), then renders a verdict and a sentence (1:13b).⁶⁵ Establishing *pathos* for specifically forensic purposes may be one of the reasons the epistolary introduction of Titus is remarkably longer than the other PE.⁶⁶ By evoking a legal proceeding in a semi-official correspondence (perhaps modelled after imperial *mandata principis*)⁶⁷ that would be read aloud and intentionally overheard by the named addressee's community, Paul makes the trial public.⁶⁸ Marshall explains that, although Titus features a salutation to an individual, the letter is transparently written “for the church for which he is responsible.”⁶⁹ Although addressed to an individual, the anticipated audience is actually that addressee's gathered religious community.⁷⁰ Within the performance of a letter in a certain genre (e.g., *mandata principis*, which originated in the domain of imperial politics), a speaker can activate themes that evoke other type-scenes (e.g., a trial).

⁶⁵ Craig S. Wansink describes components of legal proceedings and forensic rhetoric that are seen in the NT, especially in Paul's undisputed epistles, and we see several in Titus 1. See “Roman Law and Legal System,” *DNTB* (2000): 984–91.

⁶⁶ Commentators note the relative length of Titus's epistolary introduction (1:1–4) and offer various hypotheses. Marshall critiques the hypothesis that it was written to introduce a faux collection: “This hypothesis depends completely on prior assumptions.” See *Critical and Exegetical*, 112, fn 3.

⁶⁷ Johnson discusses the genre of *mandata principis* as it is proposed for Titus. See *First and Second Letters*, 137–42. For examples of the genre, see Stanley Kent Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, vol. 5 of *Library of Early Christianity*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 103–4.

⁶⁸ Wall points out that the closing greeting, which uses a plural pronoun (ὁμῶν, 3:15), “indicates the congregational scope of the exhortations and instructions addressed to the [singular] apostolic delegate [Titus].” Wall and Steele, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 373.

⁶⁹ *Critical and Exegetical*, 111.

⁷⁰ Peter Lampe and J. Paul Sampley explain that the plural address of the majority of Paul's undisputed letters is unconventional. Their survey of ancient letters indicated “the remarkable rarity of plural or communal address in Greco-Roman letters. Letters with a plural or communal address are ... far from common ... The Pauline congregational letters, with their communal mode of address, stand out as remarkable in this context.” See *Paul and Rhetoric*, *Biblical Studies* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 157.

The Apostle Paul demonstrated some knowledge of Greco-Roman legal proceedings,⁷¹ and the abundance of juridical language in Paul's undisputed epistles illuminates the use in Titus.⁷² Paul was appearing in court as a witness on behalf of the Cretans. L. Ann Jervis explains that coming to another's defense was a custom of responsibility and honor in Roman courts.⁷³ The custom also comports with Jewish standards of honor and integrity regarding witnessing on others' behalf (Lev 5:1; Deut 19:15–21). Paul could bring testimony, oath, opinions of a council (πρεσβύτερος, 1:5–9), and a version of magisterial orders (*mandata principis*) to bear in building his case. These are among the forms of forensic evidence Fredrick J. Long lists in his detailed survey of *proofs* in conventions of ancient forensic rhetoric.⁷⁴

The Apostle Paul indicated that Christians should not seek satisfaction from law courts but should judge matters themselves (1 Cor 6:1–11).⁷⁵ Craig S. Wansink indicates that Christians taking others to trial subjected the parties to all of the inequity and corruption of secular courts. By judging matters within the community, the church could ensure greater fairness between those of higher and lower status.⁷⁶ Rather than shunning juridical proceedings entirely, Paul transports them from the power-differentiated secular sphere into the community of the faithful.⁷⁷ Paul was not threatening to press charges in some higher court; he was enacting the type-scene of a courtroom by invoking allusions to juridical proceedings and by shaping his discourse according to the conventions of forensic rhetoric.⁷⁸

⁷¹ On the use of testimony in ancient forensic contexts and Paul in 2 Corinthians, see Fredrick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians*, SNTSMS 131 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47–49, 211–12. On the legal system in Paul generally, see Wansink, “Roman Law,” 989. On forensic rhetoric as it sometimes appears in Paul, see Thomas H. Olbricht, “Aristotle, Aristotelianism,” *DNTB* (2000): 119–21.

⁷² Lampe and Sampley believe that the PE, as deutero-Pauline writings, exhibit the features of rhetoric, including forensic rhetoric because they were possibly written as rhetorical exercises on the basis of a Pauline school. See *Paul and Rhetoric*, 15.

⁷³ L. Ann Jervis, “Law/Nomos in Greco-Roman World,” *DNTB* (2000): 631–36, at 634.

⁷⁴ See *Ancient Rhetoric*, 47–49.

⁷⁵ James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 158–59.

⁷⁶ See Wansink, “Roman Law,” 988–89.

⁷⁷ The church was (ideally) a place where power and status differentials were negated by the cross (Gal 3:26–28). Regarding this Galatians passage, Barclay writes, “All the pairings cited by Paul are strongly endowed with hierarchical assumptions. For Jews, to be Jewish is not just ‘different’ from being ‘Greek,’ but self-evidently superior to it—and vice versa for ‘Greeks.’” See *Paul and the Gift*, 397.

⁷⁸ In this way, Paul demonstrated what he was asking Titus to do—prosecute illegitimate teachers and leaders. See the often collocated themes of *imitation* (-μιμ- words) and *example* (-τυπ- words) in 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6–7; 2 Thess 3:9; 1 Tim 4:12; and in Titus 2:7.

The logical phrase that connects the *testimony* (1:13a) with Paul's command to *rebuke them sharply* (1:13c) is δι' ἣν αἰτίαν (*on account of which reason*, 1:13b). This phrase can be idiomatic, but the noun αἰτία also had the more specific meaning of *accusation* or "a basis for legal action" in judicial contexts.⁷⁹ There seem to be three possible candidates as the *reason* (*accusation*, αἰτία) for rebuke. In order of probability: 1) the copulative statement *this testimony is true*, 2) the *testimony* itself, or 3) the list of reprobate attitudes and behaviors the quotation articulates concerning the Cretans as per the *prima facie* reading. For several of the aforementioned reasons, and on account of its proximity as an antecedent of the relative pronoun, the best candidate seems to be the first. The reason for the rebuke is the truth of the testimony that Paul had just made.

When Paul mentioned *testimony* (μαρτυρία, 1:13), he activated witnesses, judges, offenders, and prosecutors in a sort of *Gestalt* complex cognitive entity. The word *reason* or *accusation* (αἰτία, 1:13) also corresponds to the activation of a courtroom frame. Paul was evoking key components of this type-scene. Because the conceptual frame of juridical proceedings was in plain view, his assertion of *true* (ἀληθής, 1:13) acquired a more specific thrust than it would without other components of the frame. Pragmatically, it became a verdict. Paul introduced the second-hand quotation as from an unreliable witness of whom he had already established the untrustworthy character. Paul was the μάρτυς (*witness*) of the μαρτυρία (*testimony*). Thus, Paul claimed to bear witness to the speaking of the quotation. If Paul was swearing on his own report that someone was disparaging Titus's missionary congregants, then it is *Paul's* witness, not the so-called *prophet's*, that he asserts as true. Long argues that "laws and testimony" were "the two most forceful" forms of evidence in ancient judicial rhetoric as identified in his survey of "artificial proofs." He adds, however, that "Quintilian (*Inst.* 5.7.1) attributed testimony the highest place of honor for a case."⁸⁰

Some prominent interpretations assume that the *testimony* (1:13) Paul pronounces as true is that borne by a Cretan poet. They infer that Paul ratifies the substance of the

⁷⁹ See αἰτία entry in BDAG, 31. The use depends on context. Generic examples include Luke 8:47 (*the reason why she touched him*, δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἤγατο αὐτοῦ) and Acts 22:24 (*the reason why they were thus shouting against him*, δι' ἣν αἰτίαν οὕτως ἐπεφώνουν αὐτῷ). Examples in a judicial context include Acts 23:28 (*and wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him*, βουλόμενός τε ἐπιγῶναι τὴν αἰτίαν δι' ἣν ἐνεκάλουν αὐτῷ), where the syntax differs, and Acts 28:20 (*for this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak to you*, διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν αἰτίαν παρεκάλεσα ὑμᾶς ἰδεῖν καὶ προσλαλῆσαι). Most contexts are generic (e.g., 2 Tim 1:6, 12).

⁸⁰ *Ancient Rhetoric*, 49.

quotation—that Cretans, in fact, are intrinsically morally defective. But, *In what sense is this assertion a testimony when one considers the legal domain in which this word is at home?* Such interpretations gloss over the semantic thrust of μαρτυρία (*testimony*, 1:13) and the courtroom frame that Paul seems to have been activating. Quinn recognizes the courtroom language of the letter here, but he says that Paul was joining a Cretan poet—in Quinn’s paraphrase, “one of their own countrymen”—as a second witness against the ethnic Cretans.⁸¹ According to Mounce, by these words Paul “adds his personal stamp of approval” to the quotation.⁸² It was Paul’s “way of giving apostolic authority to something said by a non-Christian.”⁸³ It is not plain, however, that Paul was deferring to the authority or vouching for the trustworthiness of the saying’s originator. Assuming so, Harrill wonders, “What exactly, however, warrants confidence in the Cretan prophet is not explained beyond the apostolic trustworthiness of the author’s own ‘Pauline’ voice.”⁸⁴ The NEB translation of 1:13a as “and he told the truth!” obscures the underlying referent embedded in the phrase. These may be examples of mismatched assumptions. If the signals of courtroom proceedings mean that Paul was presenting arguments against a group of unsanctioned leaders and essentially accusing them of misdemeanors against other believers, then this meta-comment probably refers to Paul’s own testimony. Allow me to paraphrase and embellish 1:13 to capture this thrust: *The testimony that I have presented to you regarding these troublemakers who have slurred the Cretans is hereby verified; and on account of this accusation, the penalty is a stern rebuke.*

Paul presented a case against the most shocking and blatant offenders among the troublemakers—those who justified their presumption on the basis of age-old ethnic stereotypes. Paul was not saying that all of the leadership problems in Crete centered on this issue, but bigotry was a stinging example. Somehow, Paul had received enough evidence to render this accusation against someone from among the troublemakers. It is historically likely and demonstrable that the Apostle Paul was able to receive private information about distant congregations from unofficial sources (e.g., 1 Cor 5:1), and it is plausible that Paul would have heard of the nature of problems from sources in the Cretan church.

⁸¹ *Letter to Titus*, 107.

⁸² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 397.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 398.

⁸⁴ “‘Without Lies or Deception,’” 452.

The simple recurrence of the topic of *truth and lies* in Titus accentuates the courtroom scene contextually, because occurrences cluster in 1:10-16 and because concerns with *truth* and *falsehood* correspond in specific ways to the setting of a courtroom. Within the quotation, Cretans were called *liars* (ψεύστης, 1:12), but Paul disclosed the most salient disagreement between truth and reality in the crescendo of his remarks about the troublemakers—*they profess to know God, they nevertheless deny [him] by their works* (1:16). Idiomatically, Paul’s audience could infer: *Who do they think they’re calling liars?!* It was as the proverbial *pot calling the kettle black*. Whereas Paul called his testimony *true* (ἀληθής, 1:13), he characterized some of the troublemakers’ *actions* (ἔργον, 1:16) as promoting commandments of people who reject the *truth* (ἀλήθεια, 1:14). Overly concerned with peripheral religious works, they nullify their capacity to do *any good work* (ἔργον, 1:16) by their harassment of the Cretans. These collocated contrasts are striking. Paul revealed that this topic of truth-telling and lying was already on his mind when he uniquely opened the Epistle to Titus with his own salutation as a servant of the *unlying* (ἀψευδής, 1:2) God whose purpose includes spreading the knowledge of the *truth* (ἀληθείας, 1:1).

The correlation between *truth, lies*, and a court of law is intuitive but has scriptural precedent. Consider Rom 3:4—“Let God be *true* (ἀληθής), though everyone [else] be a *liar* (ψεύστης), just as it is written, ‘So that you may be *justified* (δικαιωθῆς) in your words, and conquer when *you judge* (κρίνεσθαι σε).” The context of this verse shows the natural relation of more general-purpose words like *true* and *liar* with the narrower concepts of *acquittal* and *judgment* in the context of Paul’s judicial-style confrontation of bias and bigotry against Gentiles.⁸⁵ We will now examine a major topical aspect of context that would have shaped the original audience’s cognitive environment—*Jewish Religious Culture and Customs*.

ii. Jewish Religious Culture and Customs

In the material surrounding the Cretan quotation, Paul addressed controversies regarding several Jewish interests. Mounce writes, “This passage [1:10–16] clearly shows that the teaching was primarily Jewish.”⁸⁶ Barrett observes that the heresy in Crete “undoubtedly

⁸⁵ Further examples of this cluster of ideas, in particular swearing of oaths and testifying in a court-of-law-like setting include John 3:32–33; 8:13–18; 19:35; 21:24; Rom 3:21; 9:1; 1 Cor 15:15; 2 Cor 11; Gal 1:20; 3 John 1:12. See also Exod 23:1 (LXX); Deut 19:15–21 (LXX), treated below.

⁸⁶ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 395. He overstates the evidence when he continues, “and taught asceticism and guidelines for ritual purity and defilement.”

contained a Jewish element,” citing Titus 1:10, 14; and 3:9.⁸⁷ He claims that the cluster of heretical concerns in 3:9–11 represents “Jewish Gnosticism.”⁸⁸ Although I think that Barrett overstates the presence of gnostic elements, he rightly sees that these concerns have a Jewish root. Aageson writes, “In Titus 1:10–16, the Jewish character of the opposition in Crete is identified in general terms.”⁸⁹ The opponents were not all Jewish even though *the ones from the circumcision* (1:10) were prominent among them.⁹⁰ Few interpreters recognize that the troublemakers’ disdain for the Cretans probably intensified Paul’s concern in Titus. Stegemann, for instance, considers these as separate issues:

On the one hand it is maintained that these negative characteristics are particularly or primarily (μάλιστα) applicable to “those of the circumcision” (οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς). Shortly afterwards a warning is given not to subscribe to Jewish fables (Ἰουδαϊκοῖς μύθοις). On the other hand, the “opponents” are also identified with negative prejudices concerning the Cretans.⁹¹

Given the referential language and literary context, it would be reasonable to say that the opponents were not merely identified *with* but *as* the promulgators of these prejudices!

Although Jewish religious culture clearly featured prominently among the troublemakers of the Cretan church, that is not to say that Paul found Jews themselves or Judaism itself problematic. Mounce points out that, although the divisive element in Crete “was primarily Jewish,” not everything “must have centered on the law.”⁹² Paul was combatting distortions of Judaism as much as of his Christian gospel.⁹³ He decried corruptions of Jewish faith as much as (or *qua*) distortions of Christian faith. Even though controversy surrounded concerns of Jewish provenance, Paul did not see Judaism as inherently contrary to Christianity.

⁸⁷ Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 12. Under the influence of PE amalgamating tendencies, he emphasizes the presence of Gnosticism in Crete. He regards the *myths* of *Jewish myths* (1:14) and the *genealogies* (3:9) as primarily gnostic despite such interests being at home in non-gnostic Jewish cultural contexts. I do not fully argue against Gnosticism or Barrett’s “Jewish Gnosticism” (14–15) being an issue in Titus, although others have. Paul may have revealed affinity with a *gnosis* orientation when he identified his apostleship as *according to knowledge of the truth* (1:1, κατὰ ... ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας), acknowledged that *once, even we were ignorant* (3:3, Ἦμεν γὰρ ποτε καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀνόητοι), or instructed Titus to *put aside stupid controversies* (3:9, μωρὰς δὲ ζητήσεις ... περίστασος). Several references could be construed as having a gnostic outlook in view. My argument does not depend upon particular theological details of heresy.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁸⁹ *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*, 79.

⁹⁰ Guthrie claims that several pieces of evidence “clearly [show] that the heresy in this case had a Jewish origin.” He continues, “It is evident that in Crete some form of Jewish controversies of an entirely speculative and irrelevant nature had arisen.” See *Pastoral Epistles*, 14:44–45.

⁹¹ “Anti-Semitic and Racist,” 278; see also Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 139.

⁹² *Pastoral Epistles*, 396.

⁹³ The Apostle Paul saw himself as being true to Judaism even as he defended the gospel (e.g., Phil 1:7; 3:5).

Mounce distinguishes the problematic element in the Cretan church as “aberrant Judaism.”⁹⁴ Marginal or ancillary matters had become central for Paul’s opponents; and, instead of bearing fruit of a religious or spiritual nature, their behaviors had produced ethno-religious class stratification. The problems that Paul addressed had significant social dimensions. The epistle portrays a vacuum of leadership (1:5); and some Cretan Christians felt pressured to attend to various interests of a Jewish (Ἰουδαϊκός, 1:14) religious provenance (1:10, 14; 3:9–11), while others held to Paul’s transformative gospel to the Gentiles (2:11–15; 3:3–7). The conflict in Crete was ethno-religious at core;⁹⁵ and, in the Cretan quotation, Paul saw a smoking gun.

Although several scholars consider some of Paul’s contentions in Titus to be anti-Semitic, they still recognize “the Jewish nature of the problem in Crete.”⁹⁶ The book context of Titus suggests that alienating or factionalizing currents in the Cretan church stemmed from the comportment of a Jewish contingent (1:10, 14; 3:9–11). Barrett admits, “The introduction of *Cretans* [in 1:12] is not easy to understand after the reference in v. 10 to Jewish converts.”⁹⁷ He recognizes the contextual disjuncture that obtains under the influence of the *prima facie* interpretation, but it is only problematic for him because of his assumption that Paul’s *speaker* was not Jewish but an ethnic Cretan. The English translation that Barrett uses (NEB) reinforces this assumption by inserting *Cretan* into the quotative frame of Titus 1:12a. Context, however, suggests that the speaker was one of the (predominantly Jewish) troublemakers.

Jewish interests in Titus have two levels of specificity: First, some items directly and explicitly refer to Jewish matters on the semantic level, such as *circumcision* (περιτομή, 1:10), *Jewish* and *commandment* (Ἰουδαϊκός and ἐντολή, 1:14; see also *quarrels about the law*, μάχας νομικός, 3:9). Second, some items indirectly but plausibly

⁹⁴ *Pastoral Epistles*, lxi.

⁹⁵ According to Barrett, “Judaizers of the old kind no longer threaten the peace, and even the existence of the Church, and the place of Gentiles is so comfortably assured that the author seems unaware of the theological struggles and revolutions which preceded their admission.” It is hard to see how he can read Titus in this way without amalgamating it with the other PE. Any attentive reader of Titus can see the struggles Barrett denies. He claims that the old ethno-religious contests of the mid-first-century gave way to gnostic heresies in the PE that interest him more. Reading Titus on its own, apart from 1 and 2 Tim, the ethno-religious contestations appear clearly. See Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 32–33.

⁹⁶ Mounce uses these words (*Pastoral Epistles*, 379), whereas others might see it as *the anti-Semitic nature of the problem in Paul*. Huizenga is among such critics. See *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 139, 140, 188, *et passim*. See also Stegemann, “Anti-Semitic and Racist,” 271–94.

⁹⁷ Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 131. He continues, “Either the author has not fully thought through his material... or the Jews are to be thought of as in great measure assimilated to Cretan life.” It is interesting and amusing how commentators readily pin dullness or incoherence on a writer, rather than a reader.

refer to Jewish interests on the basis of context, such as *genealogy* (γενεαλογία, 3:9), *prophet* (προφήτης, 1:12), and *detestable* (βδελυκτός, 1:16; cf. Lev 18:30 [LXX], Rom 2:22). Both levels contribute to the overall sense that ethno-religious divisions were central to problems in the Cretan church. Notice that all of these items appear in near proximity in the two main sections where Paul directly addressed issues regarding troublemaking opponents (1:10–16; 3:9–11).⁹⁸

I argued in the previous chapter that Paul used the honorable designation *prophet* (1:12)—a significant title in Jewish religious contexts—sarcastically. He did the same with *commandments* (1:14). The *prophet* was only a truth-teller in his own mind and among the like-minded. Towner similarly judges the title to be dismissive.⁹⁹ Paul compared the presumptive leaders with the insults of the quotation. In their central flaw—deceit—the presumptive leaders were no different than the quotation’s caricature of Cretans. Regarding the quotation, Towner writes, “Paul now springs the rhetorical trap that will vilify the opponents in a way most appropriate for the Cretan church.”¹⁰⁰ Not incidentally, deceit (with corresponding notions of truth and lies) is the only moral issue from the quotation that Paul transparently develops elsewhere in the letter, primarily in the first chapter.

Jewish believers and their sympathetic associates instilled the Cretan believers with an ethno-religious inferiority complex analogous to congregations the Apostle Paul dealt with elsewhere in the NT.¹⁰¹ This is a *topos* known to readers of the NT.¹⁰² The essential substance of their message was that those who would not go in for the trappings of Jewish religious culture (e.g., *circumcision*, 1:10; *Jewish myths and commandments of men*, 1:14; *vain controversies* and *genealogies*, 3:9) could not be Christians of the first order.¹⁰³ Paul was primarily concerned with attitudes and practices that were used to denigrate Gentile Christian religious status. To gain a following, the troublemakers even deprecated the people whom Paul left Titus in Crete (1:5) to nurture. According to *prima facie* readings

⁹⁸ Mounce notes that Paul addressed problems of a “Jewish nature” in two particular sections (1:10–16 and 3:9–10). See *Pastoral Epistles*, lxix-lxx (cf. 453-454). Literary context and comparisons with texts like Lev 22:5, 8 and Num 19:13, 20 reveal that seemingly generic terms, such as καθαρός (*clean*) and μαιίνω (*defile*) in 1:15 have profound salience for anyone with Jewish religious sensibilities.

⁹⁹ See *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 691.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 694.

¹⁰¹ See Acts 15:1–2, 7–9; Rom 2:25–29; 4:14; Gal 2:14–16; 3:2–5, 8, 25–29; 5:6–12; Phil 3:2.

¹⁰² See Marshall, “Pastoral Epistles,” 284.

¹⁰³ Note that the author does not directly implicate the troublemakers with abuses of *Torah* (cf. 1 Tim 1:7–9; Titus 3:9); only certain, mostly peripheral, aspects of Jewish religious culture were in view.

that assume a contextual disjuncture, Paul abruptly shifted from his concern with these presumptive leaders to lambaste the general Cretan populace himself!

Paul labelled a significant contingent of the troublemakers in Crete *those from the circumcision* (1:10), but he did not explicitly indicate that they insisted on Gentile converts becoming circumcised (as in Gal 6:12–13). Circumcision was, of course, a central marker of Jewish identity. Mounce explains that *from the circumcision* was “a circumlocution for ‘Jewish’” used elsewhere by Paul “of Jews (Rom 4:12) and Jewish Christians (Gal 2:7–9, 12; Col 4:11 ...).”¹⁰⁴ Paul probably used the phrase as an ethno-religious designation to refer primarily to Jews. It would only secondarily refer to sympathetic Gentiles who had embraced the trappings of Jewish religious culture as a means of attaining acceptance or status. The group’s specific composition may elude us, but it is clear that patently ethno-religious factors measured and mediated contests of status in the Cretan church.¹⁰⁵

We discover elsewhere in the NT that being an uncircumcised Gentile was a key feature of Titus’s (canonical) identity (Gal 2:1–5). Wall suggests that his Gentile identity is essential to understanding the book regardless of whether he was a historical or merely literary figure in the Epistle to Titus. Wall refers to the Paul upon which the author of the Pastorals bases his inscribed writer as the “canonical Paul,” understanding that if the Pastorals were written on the basis of a proto-canon, then information from undisputed works must illuminate their meaning. We should not, then, disregard other NT texts which portray Titus, because this information was likely within the cognitive environment of the writer and original readers of the Epistle to Titus. The “canonical Titus,” then, illuminates the Titus of Titus.¹⁰⁶ Wall writes, “Titus represents God’s approval of Paul’s ‘mission to the uncircumcised’ and so of Jerusalem’s decision to initiate faithful Gentiles into the covenant.”¹⁰⁷ So, Paul’s instruction to *let no one despise you* (2:15) paralleled the correction Titus was supposed to make on behalf of his Gentile congregants.¹⁰⁸ Paul had instructed Titus to *speak and encourage and rebuke* (λάλει καὶ παρακάλει καὶ ἔλεγχε,

¹⁰⁴ *Pastoral Epistles*, 396. Mounce also cites ancient evidence from Josephus and Philo that “there were large numbers of Jews in Crete (Josephus *Ant.* 17.12.1 §§23–25; *J.W.* 2.7.1 §§101–105; *Life* 48 §247; Philo *Leg.* 282).” Quinn discusses uses of this term and phrase in *Letter to Titus*, 16, 98.

¹⁰⁵ Barclay claims that the issue Paul addressed in Galatians and his other undisputed works was the misperception that Jews intrinsically held a privileged religious status. See *Paul and the Gift*, 162. The same issues of privilege and status are visible in Titus.

¹⁰⁶ See Wall and Steele, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 34.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹⁰⁸ Based on its placement in the household code’s sequence and structure (Titus 2:1–10) and on the theme of imitation elsewhere, it is clear that Paul portrays Titus as a *model* (τύπον, 2:7) for the entire congregation. It seems that Paul wants Titus to defend himself as much as his predominantly Gentile congregation.

2:15)—a summary of actions that Paul had instructed him to perform with different constituencies earlier in the letter. In particular, a form of ἐλέγγω (*rebuke*) appears surrounding the Cretan quotation in 1:9 and 1:13. The household code (2:1–10) instructed Titus to teach a set of alternative-to-Torah—but not contrary-to-Torah—standards of personal, inter-personal, and communal behavior. While Titus did this, he was to assert and rely on his authority among the churches of Crete by virtue of Paul’s commission. Unlike Timothy, the problem Titus faced was not dismissal on the basis of age (1 Tim 4:12) as much as ethnicity—the same basis upon which the troublemakers disparaged the Cretans.

On the hearers’ minds was not only the clawing for social prominence but the pivotal role of ethnic and religious identity within that contest. John Barclay’s construal of the historical situation of Galatians is relevant to what we see in Titus.¹⁰⁹ Before Paul mentioned the quotation, he evoked the ethno-religious composition of the troublemaking constituency. Concerning such social contests among the Galatians, Barclay writes,

A central token of cultural capital within the Jewish tradition [circumcision] is here [Gal 2:1–10] acknowledged to be disposable in the mission to Gentiles—certainly not because that mission is of less significance, or the status of Gentile converts lower than that of Jews, but because *God is at work* as much in one form of the mission as in the other.¹¹⁰

The troublemakers in Crete would likely not accept such a proposition. Concerning the same type of contest, Barclay later writes, “At issue is not simply the adoption of this or that Jewish practice, but the capacity of the Christ-gift to re-found and reorient life by a logic that challenges every other attribution of value.”¹¹¹ *In light of the gospel material of Titus 2:11–15 and 3:3–7, might this also describe Paul’s contention with Crete’s troublemakers?*

Echoing the OT—the Scripture of the church (2 Tim 3:16)—is commonplace in the NT, although some commentators minimize the extent to which the PE do this. Richard B. Hays proposes seven tests to detect, confirm, and interpret such echoes. Of his seven criteria—*availability, volume, recurrence, thematic coherence, historical plausibility, history of interpretation, and satisfaction*—the two that have remarkable correspondence to RT, especially the idea (below) of implicated premises, are *thematic coherence* and

¹⁰⁹ See *Paul and the Gift*, 334.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 363.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 399.

satisfaction.¹¹² Simply echoing Scripture would not be of significance for my thesis, but some echoes correlate particularly with the Cretan quotation and the topic of Jewish religio-cultural interests.

The Cretan quotation conveniently echoed a Jewish way of referring to people as worthless (i.e., not worthy to live). In the Deuteronomic law, Israelite parents could take their rebellious son to the elders and call him “stubborn and rebellious ... a glutton and a drunkard” (Deut 21:20, NRSV). This was a premise for stoning the offender with the aim to “purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid” (Deut 21:21, NRSV). This alone does not speak to *Paul’s* intention, but the following verses in Deuteronomy illuminate a remarkable correlation with Titus. The goal of this punishment was that *you will drive out evil* (ἐξαρᾶτε τὸν πονηρὸν, Deut 21:21 [LXX]; cf. 1 Cor 5:13), and the remaining discussion says that if the Israelites leave dead bodies exposed after execution, they will *defile* (μιαίνω, Deut 21:23 [LXX]) the land. These concepts and even some lexemes have strong correspondence not only to ideas but to their sequence in Titus 1:10–16. The charges that Israelite parents would bring against their rebellious son compare with the insult of the quotation against the Cretans. The moral condition of the troublemakers (*defiled*, μιαίνω, Titus 1:15²) parallels the fate of the land if Israelites leave dead bodies out post-execution. What seems to contrast sharply are the outcomes that the accusers expect (namely, ostracism, death, and perhaps defilement) and the outcomes that Paul enjoins for the troublemakers (namely, healthy doctrine and restorative justice).¹¹³ This Scripture from Deuteronomy could have been within the cognitive environment of Paul’s audience.¹¹⁴

Within the near context of the Cretan quotation, Paul identified *Jewish myths and commandments of people who reject the truth* (1:14) as matters to which duly-rebuked people will cease to (mis)direct their attention. Aageson claims that “the problem of the commandments apparently turns on the issue of purity, associated with refraining from certain practices and from eating certain foods.... According to the text of Titus, the nature

¹¹² Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Evaluating or interacting with critiques of Hays’s methodology is beside my purpose. His concepts and categories are well-known and, therefore, readily understood labels for what I see in Titus.

¹¹³ See Chapter Three on the redemptive nature of sound doctrine in Titus.

¹¹⁴ Other correspondences include the qualification that elders not have children accused of rebellion (Titus 1:6) and the fact that Deut 21:23 is adjacent to the passage that talks about the curse of the person hung on a tree, which Paul references in Gal 3:13. The phrase is also echoed in the Gospels (Matt 11:19, Luke 7:34).

of the opposition is limited to these problems.”¹¹⁵ Paul directly linked these issues to the rebuke he enjoined (1:13). If Aageson is right, then it is most fitting for the quotation to be in the mouth of a Judaizer whose logic dictates: *If Cretans, by birth, are unclean (beasts and gluttons), then they can only enter into right relationship with the God of the Jews and live the most privileged form of Christian faith by a thorough conversion, which includes reforming dietary practices, renouncing their own identity, and embracing Jewish religious culture.*¹¹⁶ Aageson, for one, acknowledges that “the theological structures of Galatians and Titus have one thing [this concern] in common.”¹¹⁷ Aageson dismisses the scale of what he calls the “nagging judaizing tendency” in Crete, but it appears to be one of Paul’s chief concerns in Titus.¹¹⁸

Opponents who considered the Cretans to be gluttons might have advised them to observe an ascetic diet. They might have even shamed and ridiculed them. This scenario comports with Barrett’s view of “Jewish Gnosticism” in the PE,¹¹⁹ but the quotation is on the wrong lips in Barrett’s scenario. It only works if the Cretans’ opponents uttered it, not if a Cretan uttered it, as Barrett assumes. The quotation may have had a life of its own

¹¹⁵ Aageson, *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*, 80.

¹¹⁶ People customarily take their faith and worldview to be true and universally applicable. Jewish philosopher and contemporary of Paul, Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–c. 50 CE), held this attitude about Judaism. Representing a widespread sensibility in Judaism, Philo assessed that God’s favor accrued to Jews on account of their adherence to a universal set of values and ordinances. Philo wrote that Gentiles’ instructors (from their nurses to their philosophers) *impress inextricable error* (ἐνεχάραξαν πλάνον ἀνήνυτον) upon them but that God could *initiate* (συνάγων καὶ μυσταγωγῶν) into his ways *any who* were so inclined (*Virt.* 178). Gentiles, by virtue of *low birth* (δυσγένειαν), were misled by *foreign laws and unbecoming customs* (ἐξ ἀλλοκότων νόμων καὶ ἐκθέσμων ἔθῶν) but could turn to that of *which truth is the governor and overseer* (ἧς ἔφορος καὶ ἐπίσκοπος ἀλήθεια, *Virt.* 219). When Gentiles converted to Judaism, they converted to the eternal and universal truth. For Philo, one could be *born* (φύντας ἐξ ἀρχῆς, lit. *issuing from the start*) or *converted* (προσηλύτους), but *choosing to embark on piety* (πρὸς εὐσέβειαν ἠξίωσαν μεθορμίσασθαι) made one superior (*Spec.* 1.51). Converts to Judaism were evidence of its superiority and universality. Converting to true *piety* corresponded to serving the *truly living [One/God]* (τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος, *Spec.* 309). Philo, Paul, and others used *piety* (εὐσέβεια) to denote observant (Jewish/Christian) faith. Hoklutubbe explains that its currency in the Greco-Roman world made it a handy cross-over term. See *Civilized Piety*. Philo had to allegorize Judaism to universalize it, but he exemplified a common Jewish trope that the purported primacy, universality, and instrumentality of (idealized) Jewish doctrine implied its superiority. In Barclay’s assessment, Philo thought, “What Jews observe on a daily basis is not some ethnically particular legislation, still less some arbitrary collection of customs, but the tangible instantiation of the order of the cosmos. To keep the law is to follow the grain of the universe: those who do so are obviously most pleasing to God and most worthy of his gifts.” See *Paul and the Gift*, 233. Philo represented but one stripe of Judaism in which this attitude obtained. See Gregory E. Sterling, “‘A Law unto Themselves’: Limited Universalism in Philo and Paul,” *ZNW* 107 (2016): 30–47.

¹¹⁷ *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles*, 80.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 81. Aageson interprets Galatians as arguing against a theological “covenantal nomism” and does not adequately address the social dimensions of Paul’s concern in both books. Aageson focuses on Paul’s legal arguments, concluding (or confirming) that the Epistle to Titus is not concerned with improper interpretations of the law whereas Galatians is. Barclay argues the narrowness and misleading nature of the “covenantal nomism” designation. See *Paul and the Gift*, 115–58.

¹¹⁹ See *Pastoral Epistles*, *passim*.

centuries before Titus; Paul’s contemporary opponents, however, were unconcerned with this history since it conveniently served their doctrinal purposes when taken out of its original context. Barrett identifies the content of the troublemakers’ teaching as “apparently ascetic, representing a combination of Jewish food laws and dualistic rejection of the material.”¹²⁰ This conception of how the quotation was functioning contextually leads to the equation between laziness, gluttony, and vice, on the one hand, and Jewish food laws and asceticism, on the other. This is an example of how the amalgamation of the PE has introduced an artificial mismatch between the contextual assumptions held by ancient and modern readers.

When Paul articulated the redeeming purpose of Jesus’s self-giving work (Titus 2:11–15; see also 3:3–7), he expressed the logic of the gospel that undergirded his whole vision of human redemption—the reason he could see Jews and Gentiles as equals before God. Paul explained key aspects of Christian conversion that correspond verbally and conceptually to aspects of the tension he described in 1:10–16. Thus, 2:14 reads, [*Jesus*] *who gave himself on our behalf, in order that he might redeem us from every lawlessness and might cleanse unto himself a distinct people, eager for good works*. Verbal correspondences include *cleansing* (καθαρός, 1:15; καθαρίζω, 2:14) and *good works* (ἔργον ἀγαθόν, 1:16; καλῶν ἔργων, 2:14; cf. 2:7). Conceptual correspondences include the idea of the work of Christ being the basis of one’s status and the idea that the result of this Christological work is a (singular) distinct people, not a divisive compound. So, Paul’s saying *to the clean [ones] all things are clean* (1:15) was a critique that questioned the redemptive status of anyone who would take it upon themselves to call other believers *evil beasts* (1:12)—that is, *unclean*—regardless of their excuse. If a person had trusted Christ for redemption, then they did not need to follow Jewish dietary regulations or other laws. The presumptive leaders *defied* (ἀνυπο[τασσω], 1:6, 10), *contradicted* (ἀντιλέγω, 1:9; 2:9), *rejected* (ἀποστρέφω, 1:14), and *denied* (ἄρνέομαι, 1:16) this message.

Paul topicalized *ones who are defiled and unbelieving* (1:15), suspending them in a δέ development clause. By means of this left-dislocation, he accentuated the self-condemning effects of judging people’s redemptive status on an ethno-religious basis. It is only those sorts of people who find that *nothing is clean* (1:15). Simply reversing the order without changing the grammar yields a more syntactically neutral or unmarked way of

¹²⁰ Ibid., 132.

organizing the information: *nothing is clean to ones who are defiled and unfaithful*. But, Paul placed the information in a cause-and-effect order. So, *Why did the troublemakers see their Cretan brothers and sisters as unclean?* It was because the troublemakers themselves were *defiled and unfaithful*. Grammatically, *nothing is clean* is the predication; but pragmatically, *ones who are defiled and unfaithful* is the predication. To convey the effect of this topicalization, I render it: *It is to those who are defiled and unfaithful that things are unclean*. One senses the biting allegation when so phrased.

Exposing and correcting these troublemakers was not a form of bigotry—as though the history of interpretation should shift from seeing Paul as anti-Cretan to seeing him as anti-Semitic. Several dynamic facts make *church discipline*, not *bigotry*, the most appropriate designation for Paul’s interest in and speech concerning the Jewish opponents. First, Paul never renounced or denounced Judaism or condemned Jews. Second, as a matter of fact, he said that the ethno-religious composition of the opponent group was mostly (but not all) Jewish; but they did, after all, have a significant place in the early formation of the church. Third, the issues he mentioned as being *foolish*, *empty*, or *useless* (1:10, 14; 3:9) were not central to Judaism. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, there was a power differential that the troublemakers were trying to expand and take advantage of by means of driving a wedge of bigotry and hierarchical social status between Jewish and Cretan Christians within the church. So, Paul was concerned for the members of his vulnerable missionary congregation as well as for the integrity of the gospel. If the Cretan quotation seems simply repugnant and appalling, that was Paul’s point.

iii. Division

The foregoing observations suggest the prevalence of ethno-religious tensions in the Cretan church. A theme of division is present throughout the epistle, even though Paul did not mention a *divisive person* (αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον, 3:10) until later in the letter. The concept of division, us/them distinctions, in/out contests, and the dynamics of superiority and inferiority were on the audience’s minds. We derive the English word *heretic* from the Greek word αἰρετικός that Paul used to label that kind of troublemaker, but a set of propositional beliefs that contradict another set of propositional beliefs does not appear to be what ailed the Cretan church. The ethno-religious social tensions could not be ignored. As suggested above, Titus himself was likely a collateral target of such prejudices (2:15).

That Paul did not more explicitly outline the false beliefs against which he contended frustrates several commentators, but the PE themselves do not necessarily maintain that a wrong set of ideas is at issue. For example, Huizenga writes, “We should be suspicious of the author’s labels imposed on those who disagree with his teachings, especially since he does not describe or engage their ideas in any constructive way.”¹²¹ Bassler is disappointed that “The author’s refusal to engage his opponents in a substantive debate does not allow us to identify their theology with any precision.”¹²² Stegemann contends, “We shall not be able to extract the beliefs and teachings, or praxis, of the Christians who are so sharply rejected here, from the Pastoral Epistles. They have disappeared in the sea of polemic.”¹²³ In historical retrospect, commentators can reconstruct forms of heresy as they appeared to evolve, but these reconstructions are based on a limited and arbitrary selection of available texts. Most commonly, scholars compare Gnostic Christian writings with the ideas Paul refuted in the Pastorals,¹²⁴ but the heart of the problem in Crete does not seem to have been a matter of lining up theological ideas in the wrong fashion. It was the social and behavioral outcomes of division that were unacceptable. The gospel that Christ accepts people without regard to conventional tokens of status confounds the attempts of superiority groups to place additional demands upon converts. Christ is the agent of acceptance and his ruling cannot be overturned: Jews and Gentiles are equals in grace.

Establishing *us* and *them*, also known as *othering*, is intrinsic to defining boundaries around cultures and ethnicities. In the religious matrix of *clean* versus *unclean* (1:15), an epithet of *evil beasts* (1:12) had strong *in* and *out* implications. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow explains that “The Pastoral Epistles construct opponents through ‘othering’ them in various ways ... The Pastoral Paul’s polemic is built on a technique where previously influential insiders are made through degradation to be outsiders.”¹²⁵ *Othering* occurs when speech distances people from the speaker, who is always the

¹²¹ *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 179.

¹²² *1 Timothy*, 189.

¹²³ “Anti-Semitic and Racist,” 279. See also Twomey, *Pastoral Epistles*, 218–23. This seems to be an outcome of viewing the PE as an amalgam.

¹²⁴ For example, Bassler, *1 Timothy*, 27–28; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 12, 14–15, 32–33, 127, 145; Twomey, *Pastoral Epistles*, 224; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 396, 402. For examples of countervailing judgments on this very issue, see Faber, “‘Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons,’” 141 (also 137–138); Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 12, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 14–15.

¹²⁵ *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*, BZBW 164 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 15.

protagonist of natural language communication. Ascribing inferiority (e.g., intellectual, moral, hereditary, doctrinal) is intrinsic to *othering*. In an academic environment of skepticism and distrust that loathes reading texts in sympathy with writers, *othering* is almost invariably suspect. I think, however, that *othering* may be a linguistic pragmatic tool that can be wielded in just *and* unjust ways. The Cretan quotation certainly exemplifies negative, othering speech. By echoing comparable negative categories for the troublemakers (e.g., unclean, defiled, turning from the truth), Paul uses othering speech to affect correction and restoration.

With certain exceptions, *insiders* in such a framework perceive the *other* as tacitly inferior in some way. In Christian conversion, one changes status and views the old self as *other*. The categories of difference that were once available for ethnic and cultural *othering* are no longer applicable to this new status in Christ. This inapplicability seems central to the Epistle of Titus, especially as expressed in 3:3–5. Contradictions of this new reality seem to parallel what Paul contended with in Galatians. As Barclay says of the issue in Galatians, “The Christ-event [is] subversive of normative systems of worth.” Circumcision, and even uncircumcision (Gal 6:15), may have been “tokens of superiority” or “the object of public pride,” but they had no currency in the household of God.¹²⁶ “The Christ-event” in Titus is signified in the language of *epiphany* (2:11; 3:4). “Tokens of superiority” (i.e., signs of participation in a superior group),¹²⁷ such as circumcision, observance of visible ceremonies, or adept participation in controversy may have been means of establishing status; but Paul repeatedly instructs subjection, not self-aggrandizement, within the household of God.¹²⁸ The anthropological prevalence of this type of thinking and social arrangement reinforces the notion that the troublemakers were leveraging existing “tokens of superiority” to form primitive social structures, falsely dividing the Cretan church into superior and inferior groups.

If heresy causes or exacerbates division and animosity; then, in this sense, the Cretan quotation is an expression of heresy even though its semantic representation does not strike the modern reader as holding much theological content. *Heresy* has come to mean straying from an established dogma, but heterodoxy is only one aspect of division. The modern impulse to identify this or that particular heresy from a known line-up of

¹²⁶ See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 394.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ See shortly below under *Submission*.

heterodoxies is anachronistic.¹²⁹ We cannot tell precisely what theological propositions the troublemakers taught, because Paul expresses his concern with them in terms of their social effect upon the church (e.g., *upsetting whole houses*, 1:11). Paul hoped that Titus could restore the presumptive leaders (*in order that they might be healthy in the faith*, ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει, 1:13b). He was protecting the community's tenants as much as the community's tenets!¹³⁰

Paul gave specific instructions to Titus in dealing with *a divisive person* (3:9–11). Such persons correspond to the main category of troublemakers that concerned Paul. They divided and were divided from the Pauline church, outcomes that correspond to the troublemakers' actions (1:10–12). Stegemann perceives the association:

The author of the letter understands [the antagonists] as a sort of 'party' (cf. Titus 3:10) within the Christian communities of Crete ... these negative characteristics are particularly or primarily (μάλιστα) applicable to 'those of the circumcision' (οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς). Shortly afterwards a warning is given not to subscribe to Jewish fables (Ἰουδαϊκοῖς μύθοις).¹³¹

He identifies unmistakable references to Jewish religious culture in Titus—*circumcision*, appearing before the quotation (1:10), and *Jewish myths*, appearing afterward (1:14). Paul seems, then, to have been concerned with one main category of troublemakers, some of whom express their divisiveness through pithy ethno-religious insults.

iv. Moral Topics

The Cretan quotation represents a different set of moral concerns than Paul himself presents in the rest of Titus, where gluttony, laziness, and general debauchery are not even broached. Hoklotubbe argues that Paul's concern in Titus had to do with a cluster of ethical and religious behaviors that corresponded to the general rubric of *piety* (εὐσέβεια, 1:1).¹³² The contingent most likely to disparage Cretans on account of general moral faults

¹²⁹ Suspecting that canonized literature represents an inherently oppressive orthodoxy is also anachronistic. See Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 181. He claims, "Written attacks of the proto-orthodox on Christians of other persuasions" led to the tragic loss of so-called heretical writings due to campaigns of eradication that have distorted history, thus "the polemical literature from the period looks completely one-sided."

¹³⁰ In his undisputed works, the Apostle Paul commonly addressed divisions of various kinds. See Rom 11:17–21; 14:1–4; 1 Cor 1:10; 11:18; 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6–7; 4:17, 29; 5:15; Phil 2:1–2; 4:2; and less so, but still present, 1 Thess 5:13; but apparently not Phlm. See also Eph 2:11–13, 21–22; 4:1–6; Col 2:16; 3:15; 2 Thess 3:6, 14–15; 1 Tim 1:3–4; 6:3–5; 2 Tim 4:3–4, 16.

¹³¹ Stegemann, "Anti-Semitic and Racist."

¹³² Hoklotubbe, *Civilized Piety*.

was one that advocated strict food laws and proto-gnostic moral scruples.¹³³ So, whereas Paul addressed one set of character traits, his opponents were preoccupied with another, which happened to be reflected in the quotation. Kidd and Faber have attempted to correlate the moral concerns of the quotation with the broad moral concerns of the book, but the connections are tenuous.¹³⁴ When Paul speaks in his own voice (that is, not in words he attributes to another), a specific set of issues repeatedly concerns him. At the center are practices of right teaching (1:9²; 2:1, 3, 7, 10) and submission (next heading), the personal qualities of σῶφρων (*sensible*, 1:8; 2:2, 5; cognates in 2:4, 6, 12) and σεμνός (*serious*, 2:2, 7), and a number of φιλο- root words (*loving [appropriately]*, 1:8²; 2:4²; 3:4, 15).¹³⁵ The spread of these virtues across every social category that Paul addresses yields a remarkable comparison among the expectations of each group. In other words, what Paul expects of one category of people has a high degree of correspondence to what he expects of otherwise contrasting groups, including leaders and slaves, women and men, young and old, Jew and Gentile.¹³⁶ If Paul was truly concerned with gluttony or laziness, he knew how to address those issues (cf. Rom 14:20–21; 16:18; 1 Cor 5:11; 8:8–13; 10:7; 11:20–22, 33–34; Gal 6:9; Eph 4:28; 1 Thess 2:9; 4:9–12; 5:14; 2 Thess 3:6–15; 1 Tim 5:13), but he did not do so in Titus.¹³⁷

Paul showed some concern in the rest of Titus with general morals, but the issue he exposed through the quotation is bigotry—not gluttony, laziness, or general wickedness. A troublemaker enacted bigotry by deploying the quotation, which Paul exposed and rebuked. Although bigotry is not in the semantics of the quotation, it is in the pragmatics. The quotation they propagated and its subsequent history of interpretation make the Cretans out to be much worse than Paul’s instructions in the rest of Titus suggest as he called them to thoughtfulness, self-control, devotion, submission, love, and so forth.

¹³³ See Twomey, *Pastoral Epistles*, 224; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 402; Bassler, *1 Timothy*, 27–28; Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 127, 145.

¹³⁴ See Kidd, “Titus as Apologia;” Faber, ““Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons.””

¹³⁵ Marshall says that Titus 2:12 provides the clearest and most complete clustering of cardinal Greek virtues in the PE (σωφρόνως καὶ δικαίως καὶ εὐσεβῶς). See *Critical and Exegetical*, 183–84. Furthermore, Paul’s Hellenistic Judaism bridged this cluster between standard virtues of Gentiles and Jews in the church, so his summary strategically invoked a conception of goodness that would resonate with his entire audience.

¹³⁶ It is revealing but unnecessary for reconstructing the audience’s cognitive environment and, therefore, beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the overlap of moral expectations among groups. It echoes such a core Pauline doctrine as the radical equality of persons before God seen in 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; even Col 3:11 and Rom 10:12. This correspondence is particularly visible through an explicit comparative connective adverb that Paul used in Titus to move from one category to another (ὡσαύτως, 2:3, 6).

¹³⁷ When needed, the Apostle Paul could call a congregation to cease and desist from numerous kinds of wrongdoing. In addition to passages above, consider 1 Cor 6:8; Eph 4:25; Col 3:8–9; and Acts 20:33–35.

v. Submission

One of the strongest themes throughout Titus is *submission*. This theme emerges from the portrayal of social relationships evoked by many occurrences of Greek words that feature -ταγ- roots (ἐπιταγή, *command* [n], 1:3; 2:15; διατάσσω, *command* [v], 1:5; ἀνυπότακτος, *insubordinate*, 1:6, 10; ὑποτάσσω, *submit*, 2:5, 9; 3:1) and from specific words sharing that semantic domain such as ἐγκρατής (*disciplined*, 1:8), ἐξουσία and πειθαρέω (*authority* [*figure*] and *obey*, 3:1).¹³⁸ The theme of submission does not follow a superiority-and-inferiority scheme but an *equals-in-humility* program that applies to the entire constituency of the church, including Paul himself. Unlike the social dynamic that the troublemakers pushed, where others are inferior, submission commits all uses of power and freedom to the service of others.¹³⁹

After discussing the need and criteria for good leaders, Paul introduced the prime leadership problem he perceived in the Cretan church: *For many are insubordinate* (Εἰσὶν γὰρ πολλοὶ ἀνυπότακτοι, 1:10).¹⁴⁰ Paul is concerned with obedience and submission throughout Titus, and leaders themselves were to model these qualities. Every level of church member was supposed to be submissive. These troublemakers, however, saw themselves as above all this.

The troublemakers may have looked at Titus's Gentile ethnicity as an excuse not to show him deference (2:15). To them, he was inherently an inferior and an unacceptable leader. The underlying prejudice of the Cretan quotation made any Gentile unacceptable as a leader. Titus was no better than a Cretan; because what was at issue was the Cretans *qua* Gentiles, not *qua* Cretans. It seems that in the Cretan quotation his antagonists had laid their hands on a conveniently specific popular saying.

¹³⁸ This list could be even larger. Paul discourages being *enslaved* (δουλόω, 2:3) by wine; says that *servicing* (δουλεύω, 3:3) various passions and pleasures characterized Christians' former life; refers to *commandments* (ἐντολή, 1:14), which imply expectations of obedience. The words listed fall into one of three semantic domains shared with ὑποτάσσω (2:5, 9; 3:1), the most frequent word of this kind in Titus. The domains are 33F' Command, Order; 36C Obey, Disobey; and 37A Control, Restrain as outlined in Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, ed. Rondal B. Smith and Karen A. Munson, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989). I acknowledge critiques of their philosophy and method regarding semantic domains, but the point remains that concerns for submission are remarkably prominent in Titus with respect to all populations.

¹³⁹ David Lyon proposes that post-modern shifts toward hermeneutics of retrieval (discussed below) help readers to recognize their moral responsibility to "anyone who has valid claims on us." My relevance-guided interpretation reclaims this feature of Titus that I describe in terms of submission. See "Sliding in All Directions: Social Hermeneutics from Suspicion to Retrieval," in *Disciplining Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Christian Perspective*, ed. Roger Lundin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 99–115, at 112–113.

¹⁴⁰ The presence of a variant that includes καί in this text (discussed earlier) does not affect my point that the initial problem Paul points to is insubordination among the presumptive leaders.

Unsurprisingly, Paul placed instructions regarding slaves where they would normally appear in a household code—at the end (2:9–10).¹⁴¹ And, as expected, submission was a requirement for slaves. Although 2:1–10 is indeed a household code, several familial relations are absent. The only explicit relations mentioned are between older and younger women (2:3–4), between younger women and their own husbands and children (2:5), between Titus and younger men (2:6–7), and between slaves and their own masters (2:9). Paul could take for granted that Titus thought slaves within a household should be obedient and *not talk back* (μὴ ἀντιλέγοντας, 2:9; cf. 1:9), but his discussion of slaves evoked other associations and the places of people within the *household of God*—a recognized metaphor for the church.¹⁴² In this way, the literal household code reinforced the metaphorical environment of God’s household and the call toward specific dispositions (prominently, *submission*) in all types of relationships as articulated elsewhere in Titus.¹⁴³

Regarding the theme of submission, note the initial prominence of Paul as a *slave* (δοῦλος, 1:1) of God and leaders pictured as *household stewards* (οἰκονόμον, 1:7, a category of slave or servant). Notice also that attributes customarily associated with subordinates, such as slaves, are expected even of leaders in God’s (ideal) household. For instance, submission, un-greediness, and not-talking-back all appear as expectations of the general church population. These qualities appear both in the household code for slaves (2:9–10) and in the leadership discussion (1:7–10) as desired traits. The troublemakers, however, exhibit the opposite qualities, being *contradictory* and *insubordinate* (ἀντιλέγω, 1:9; ἀνυπότακτος, 1:10). When Paul says, *Slaves should be submissive ... pleasing ... and not talk back* (Δούλους ... ὑποτάσσεσθαι ... εὐαρέστους εἶναι, μὴ ἀντιλέγοντας 2:9), he is repeating several of the key qualities expected of those who execute authentic leadership roles with integrity. They are to instantiate the values of submission and sensibility, just as Titus was to be a *model* for them (τύπον, 2:7; cf. 1 Tim 4:12; Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:9; 1 Pet 5:3).

¹⁴¹ See David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, vol. 8 of *Library of Early Christianity*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 196; Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era*, 86–87, 228–29.

¹⁴² Much has been made of the prevalence of this metaphor as distinctive of the Pastorals. The Greek phrases translated *household of God* actually appear in Eph 2:19 (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ); 1 Tim 3:15 (οἶκος θεοῦ); and 1 Pet 4:17 (τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ). The community of faith portrayed as a household is more of a theme in Titus than a set phrase, but it was a ready metaphor throughout Scripture.

¹⁴³ The troublemakers’ behaviors occupy the *pre-conversion* end of the submission-insubordination continuum. Being *disobedient* (ἀπειθής) and *servicing* (δουλεύω) *all kinds of passions and pleasures* characterized us, even Paul, before *the kindness and love of God our savior appeared* (ἐπιφαίνω) and prior to *rebirth* (παλιγγενεσία). See Titus 3:3–7.

Paul's expectations of slaves and his general expectations of all Christians parallel one another remarkably. In the section of Titus regarding general instructions for all Christians, Paul urges *showing all gentleness* (πᾶσαν ἐνδεικνυμένους πραΰτητα, 3:2); while in the section of the household code regarding slaves, he urges *showing all good faith* (πᾶσαν πίστιν ἐνδεικνυμένους ἀγαθὴν, 2:10). The actual household code of Titus 2:1–10 has an additional layer of significance. The portion regarding slaves submitting does not complete an otherwise comprehensive code, but it shows that the expectations of every member of the household are parallel with the requirements of good leaders. The comparison demonstrates that Paul expects the Christian community to exhibit submission from the top to the bottom of the social ladder—an attitude the presumptive leaders in Crete did not share. The requirements of a true leader were precisely those of servanthood—another contrast with the aggrandizing behavior of the antagonists. The code applies comparable values to all people—even Paul, who begins the letter by identifying himself within this category of *slave* (δοῦλος, 1:1; cf. 2:9). Paul indicates that submission, non-contentiousness, and un-greediness are specific qualities to look for among those in higher-status positions. Titus's leadership section (1:5–16) and household code (2:1–10) feature striking correspondences between submission or the lack thereof (ὑποτάσσω, 2:9; cf. ἀνυπότακτος, 1:10), talking back or contradicting (ἀντιλέγω, 2:9; cf. 1:9), and inappropriate gain (νοσφίζομαι, 2:10; cf. αἰσχροκερδής, 1:7; αἰσχροῦ κέρδους χάριν, 11). *Servants must be good; despots [δεσπόται, 2:9] ought to be gooder!* or so to speak.

We have now covered several critical themes and topics for understanding the audience's cognitive environment as well as pertinent structural matters. The other kind of contextual assumption that readers bring to interpretation are *Implicated Premises* which they must logically infer.

Implicated Premises

As we have seen, words and ideas within a hearer's context—from encyclopedic real-world knowledge to topics and themes emerging within the discourse—shape his cognitive environment and delimit his contextual assumptions. In RT, *implicated premises* represent another kind of contextual assumption. Such premises are that subset of all possible contextual assumptions which are *logically necessary* in order to derive adequate cognitive effects for the processing effort expended, thereby arriving at a satisfactory interpretation of the utterance and concluding what the speaker intends.

Implicated premises are not contained in the informational content of either the semantic representation or the knowledge-base of the hearer; thus, strictly speaking, they are not within the hearer's cognitive environment. They are logically required, however, to arrive at correct conclusions about utterance meaning. Implicated premises are grounded, first, in the presumption of relevance that natural language users bring to communication and, second, in the fact that an utterance has been made. Hearers process utterances as if on a quest for relevance, as the cognitive and communicative principles of relevance assert. Respectively, these principles claim that "human cognition is geared toward the maximization of relevance" and that "every ostensive stimulus communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance."¹⁴⁴ Below is a basic example of how hearers arrive at implicated premises:

Utterance in context:

Ken: Do you fancy a cup of coffee?

Bev: Actually, I'm avoiding drinks with tannin in them at the moment.

Explicature: Bev is avoiding drinks with tannin in them.¹⁴⁵

In order for Bev's utterance to be relevant, something must follow from it that provides a response to Ken's question. Bev could intend to obfuscate and dismiss Ken's question, which he would likely discern if there were not a more likely and cognitively rewarding conclusion. This is where Grice's "Modified Occam's Razor" helps interpreters decide between competing possibilities: "Senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity."¹⁴⁶ Clark outlines the evidence and logical inferences of the above exchange as follows:

- a. Bev has said that Bev is avoiding tannin.
- b. Bev knows that I know that I have just asked whether Bev wants coffee.
- c. If coffee contains tannin then Bev will not want coffee.
- d. So Bev must think that coffee contains tannin.

Implicated premise: Coffee contains tannin.

Implicated conclusion: Bev does not want to drink coffee.

¹⁴⁴ See Carston and Uchida, *Relevance Theory*, 298; Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 29–34.

¹⁴⁵ This summary is adapted from Clark, who analyzes examples in detail in *Relevance Theory*, 224–34.

¹⁴⁶ See Sperber and Wilson, "Pragmatics" (2007), 468–69. They cite Grice's claim from his 1967 William James Lectures at Harvard. The rule helps to determine when to abort the attempt to stretch into an expected range of meaning and instead to reach a simpler *pragmatic* interpretation, such as, *The speaker does not want to answer my question*. Another implication is that one need not infer what is semantically plain. See Grice's own discussion in "Further Notes on Logic and Conversation," 47–51.

An analyst could find no end to the logically intermediate steps required to infer the meaning of an utterance, such as the implicated premise that coffee is a drink, which may or may not be encyclopedic real-world knowledge to a hearer. Relevance theorists cannot be exhaustive but delineate select intermediate steps for illustrative and explanatory purposes. Gibbs underscores the broad scope of such premises:

These assumptions range from recognition of the mutual belief that both author and reader are reasonably competent speakers of the same language up to very specific mutual assumptions about particular linguistic and conceptual knowledge from which readers can draw inferences about what is meant.¹⁴⁷

Notice that whether coffee contains tannin can neither be derived from the semantic content of Bev's statement nor be assumed as within the encyclopedic knowledge of the common hearer. Nevertheless, the fact is logically necessary to Ken's arriving at a satisfying (i.e., relevant) interpretation. This is what makes it an implicated premise.

Implicated premises are critical for understanding the Cretan quotation. Hearers infer implicated premises on the basis of their presumption of relevance plus the fact that the speaker has made an utterance. In Clark's words, "**implicated conclusions** are inferred from the explicatures of the utterance plus contextual assumptions, and...**implicated premises** are inferred from the presumption of relevance plus the fact that the utterance has been made."¹⁴⁸ The strength of an implicated premise depends on evidence that the speaker provides that her intended meaning requires it. The strongest implicated premises are those that *need* to be recovered in order to arrive at a relevant interpretation. Implicated premises are contextual assumptions by necessity. Clark explains that contextual assumptions will count as implicated premises to the extent that they are *required* to arrive at a satisfactory overall interpretation—that is, an interpretation that rewards the listener with adequate cognitive effects for the processing effort.¹⁴⁹

Audiences must combine innumerable contextual assumptions with explicatures to arrive at utterance meaning. They must bridge numerous gaps unaided by the semantics of the sentences uttered. Although hearers cannot consciously evaluate all possible implicated premises (e.g., whether a speaker uses English), certain premises will either be necessary or more strongly implicated. In natural language, hearers do not need to identify these premises; they just need to assume them. Modern interpreters of the Bible, however, must

¹⁴⁷ "Intentionalist Controversy," 190.

¹⁴⁸ *Relevance Theory*, 228, original emphasis.

¹⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 227, 238–39.

have various means for evaluating the strength of implications. The three key means are hearer intuition, satisfactory coherence, and cognitive effects. I now briefly explain these three.

First: *hearer intuition*. Interpretations and the premises that contribute to them should not violate our intuitions. When people who share a natural language have a conversation, their inferential intuitions are generally reliable. Of course, there are multiple kinds and degrees of separation when modern readers interpret Scripture; so great care, humility, and tentativeness are in order. Nevertheless, in a closing chapter on testing pragmatic theories, Clark quotes Recanati, describing the “Availability Hypothesis: In determining whether a pragmatically determined aspect of utterance meaning is part of what is said..., we should always try to preserve our pre-theoretical intuitions on the matter.”¹⁵⁰ This yields a general rule: if an interpretation contradicts our intuitions about what an utterance *could* mean, then it is suspect, or we should at least have other strong grounds for accepting it. In this light, some *prima facie* interpretations seem unsustainable because, for one thing, to *rebuke them* (ἔλεγχε αὐτοὺς, 1:13), meaning either a specific ethnic group in the church or its host nation, sounds absurd.

Second: *satisfactory coherence*. An implicated premise should yield a more coherent reading, so an utterance’s becoming more coherent on the basis of a given assumption is evidence for its acceptance. If we assume that the Cretan quotation is being spoken by someone of status within the group of troublemakers, then Paul’s concern with it is immediately apparent. If we do not assume this, then it is difficult to make sense of its placement in Titus 1:12. It seems a *non sequitur*.

Third: *cognitive effects*. One can compare the cognitive effects of interpretations that either include or exclude a given premise. In Chapter Three, I discuss cognitive effects in more detail, but let us consider them briefly here. Relevance theorists delineate three basic kinds of cognitive effects: strengthening an existing assumption, contradicting an assumption, or synthesizing new information from new and old assumptions which could not be derived from either alone.¹⁵¹ If Paul used the Cretan quotation to actually expose and address bigotry in the church, then the cognitive effects would be enormous. That Paul intended this effect is plausible; and his original audience would arrive at it if they grasped

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 333; quoting from page 310 of François Recanati, “The Pragmatics of What Is Said,” *M&L* 4 (1989): 295–329.

¹⁵¹ Abbreviated from Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 102. For fuller discussion, see *ibid.*, 99–104.

the implicated premise that Titus 1:12 served Paul’s purpose of exposing the gospel-denying, mission-destroying bigotry of the troublemakers rather than of repeating an overworn trope about Cretan delinquency. Imagine, by analogy, the cognitive effects that extended to Corinthian Christians who had just realized that the Apostle Paul knew of, objected to, and chastened the church regarding incest (1 Cor 5:1).

Let us examine the implicated premise that Paul’s utterance in Titus 1:12 aims at serving the purposes of the Christian community in Crete by exposing the character and behavior of troublemakers on the bases of intuition, coherence, and effects. Intuition suggests that Paul’s concern in the epistle is a Christian community that includes ethnic Cretans and Jews as well as the troublemakers among them. That is, these troublemakers are within the church. Barrett holds this premise explicitly: “The *objectors* are not outside the Church, but within it; the author would not have found it necessary to deal with the heathen in this way.”¹⁵² Unfortunately, he does not carry its implications forward into his interpretation, concluding that Paul had a low view of Cretans generally and a high view of the speaker of the quotation irrespective of their relation to the church. One piece of evidence for accepting the implicated premise that Paul’s use of the Cretan quotation was part of intra-community, as opposed to extra-community, paraenesis is the *target* of the rebuke—i.e., *whom* it addressed. As throughout the NT, the paraenesis was aimed within the community, not at the wider world. Paul’s instructions made sense on the basis of this implicated premise. He did not address the character and the sins of those outside the church, except as regards believers’ responses to it. Paul instructed Titus in what to do with the troublemakers (1:13–14), not with Cretans in general. One specific instruction that is central to the context (1:10–16) and that is repeated within the letter (1:9, 13; 2:15) is Paul’s sanction to *convict* or *rebuke* (ἐλέγχω, 1:9, 13)¹⁵³ those who *contradict* (ἀντιλέγω, 1:9; cf. 2:9). This instruction corresponds closely to that of *admonishing a divisive person* (νουθεσία, αἰρετικὸς ἄνθρωπος, 3:10). The reason Paul initially said that elders must be able to *rebuke* (ἐλέγχω, 1:9) those who contradict is *because* (γὰρ, 1:10) of the presence and activity of troublemakers. So, Titus’s *rebuke* (ἐλέγχω, 1:13) was directed at those troublemakers and *not* at the Cretans in general. Barrett recognizes that the antagonists, “rather than heathen” in general, are a part of the Christian community; yet, because he does not carry this premise into his interpretation, he maintains that ethnic Cretans merit a

¹⁵² *Pastoral Epistles*, 130.

¹⁵³ See entry for ἐλέγχω in BDAG, 315.

rebuke on the basis of 1:13—a classic mismatch between the contextual assumptions of the original audience and a modern interpreter.¹⁵⁴

In Titus, Paul enjoined different kinds of rebuke (ἐλέγχω in 1:9 and 13; ἐπιστομίζω in 1:11; νοουθεσία in 3:10) but always toward the same kind of target. He referred to antagonists in general terms (e.g., 1:9; cf. 2:8); but original recipients of the letter were likely able to successfully correlate Paul’s descriptions to recognized individuals or groups according to the character, behavior, and attributes he mentioned. An implicated premise that original recipients of the letter likely inferred was that actual troublemakers causing actual problems were behind Paul’s discussion of such things. In other words, their cognitive quest for relevance would have automatically triggered correspondences between items in Paul’s speech and items in their world. Modern readers automatically do this, too, but with an unavoidable mismatch. For the historical author and recipient, the references would be to a more closely shared set of persons and circumstances.

The *purpose* of the rebuke provides additional evidence for accepting the implicated premise that the Cretan quotation is commensurate with intra-community paraenesis. Although interventions for this serious issue were to be conducted *sternly* (ἀποτόμως 1:13), they were generally restorative and aimed to bring the offending party into a *healthy* (ὕγιαίνω and cognates in 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2, 8) relationship with both the truth and the congregation. Again, Barrett judges correctly: “The word [ὕγιαίνω] suggests not only freedom from error, but also teaching which is able to impart healthiness, that is, salvation.”¹⁵⁵ The goal was restoration for the sake of the entire community, including the troublemakers. The aim of Titus’s rebuke can be called *restorative* in that the purpose (ἵνα, 1:13) was *well-being* (ὕγιαίνω, 1:13). The intention was that the presumptive leaders would be themselves sound in the faith, just as was expected of elders (1:9), older men (2:2), and Titus himself (2:1, 8). Those within the church who stirred up strife and misled entire Cretan households were not to be utterly and finally shunned; they could be restored as long as they heeded Titus’s stern rebuke (1:13; cf. 3:10).

The purpose of Titus’s rebuke was not to turn those dastardly Cretans toward the right way of thinking and living. Such a view does not accept the implicated premise that Paul was engaged in intra-community paraenesis and also fails on the basis of intuition and coherence. It neglects to reckon with the real problems of going on a wholesale campaign

¹⁵⁴ See *Pastoral Epistles*, 130.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

to transform a population without any reference to the gospel. Taking the quotation *prima facie* leads Mounce to wonder “if the description ... might also include non-Christian society in Crete.”¹⁵⁶ This question is unnecessary because, in Titus, Paul expressed a doctrine of Christian transformation that was incompatible with a description of converts as intrinsically reprobate, regardless of ethnicity (2:11–15; 3:3–7). Titus was not being instructed to rebuke Cretans in general but a group quite distinct from that description—those who reinforced the doctrine that Cretans had an inferior status as Gentile believers.¹⁵⁷ The goal was restoration within the community of all constituents of the community. Now that I have explained implicated premises and observed some examples in Titus, I will use an RT-inspired schematic to show the progression from sentence-in-context to propositional interpretation.

Schematic Model

Sperber and Wilson delineate the logical process of moving from linguistically-encoded semantic representations through explicatures to implicatures. The process involves forming and testing hypotheses, and they present example schematics that Relevance theorists sometimes replicate to outline interpretations.¹⁵⁸ At the end of this section, I produce an example *schematic model* that outlines hypotheses formed in the process of understanding Titus 1:12–14.¹⁵⁹ Even though the process is rapid, intuitive, and virtually simultaneous for natural language users, we logically delineate the following inferential tasks for interpretation: hearers enrich the semantic representation (logical form) by inference to derive explicatures; they then combine those explicatures with contextual assumptions, including implicated premises, to arrive at propositional interpretations (implicatures or implicated conclusions). In the schematic model below (Tables 3a–c), I outline these tasks sequentially from top-to-bottom for transparency. I begin with the linguistically-encoded semantic representation from a reference in Titus. I draw out reasonable explicatures in propositional form. Then, I summarize some critical contextual assumptions. According to RT, hearers infer meaning from the interaction of items in these

¹⁵⁶ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 398.

¹⁵⁷ The PE feature restorative justice. Paul imposed discipline to instruct not condemn: *whom I have handed over to Satan in order that (ἵνα) they might be taught* (1 Tim 1:20). Barrett says of this passage, “This may mean that they were to be restored by some kind of disciplinary process.” See *Pastoral Epistles*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ See “Pragmatics” (2007), 482. For variations developed from their conceptualizations, see Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 297–99.

¹⁵⁹ For an example of such models, see Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 224 (example 24). I base my process on a schematic that Clark uses repeatedly, though not in chart form.

middle two rows; so, lastly, I present relevant implicatures.¹⁶⁰ As noted, it is impossible to capture every intermediate logical step on the way to an interpretation, so the schematic is illustrative. I go through this process with three example passages to demonstrate one transparent approach to the process of a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic.

Table 3a—Titus 1:12a	
Logical Forms, Explicatures, Contextual Assumptions, and Implicatures	
Logical Forms (linguistically-encoded semantic representation)	εἶπέν τις ἐξ αὐτῶν ἴδιος αὐτῶν προφήτης <i>Someone from among them—a prophet of theirs—said:</i>
Explicatures (the proposition expressed)	An unnamed person that belongs to a previously mentioned group, who is considered a prophet within that group, has said the words that follow.
Contextual Assumptions (including implicated premises)	<p>Paul does not claim ownership of the statement he is about to utter, but he emphatically refers to the speaker as one of <i>theirs</i>.</p> <p>The trustworthiness of the quotation depends on that of the group referred to as <i>them</i>.</p> <p>The only group that Paul describes in the immediately prior context of several verses was comprised of <i>troublemakers</i>.</p> <p>For a person to be considered a <i>prophet</i> among such a group is no compliment at all.</p> <p>The speaker, therefore, is not trustworthy, and Paul does not share or endorse his opinion.</p> <p>The context should illuminate Paul’s actual reason for mentioning the quotation given that he does not sympathize with it.</p> <p>In the context, Paul describes character, behavior, and motivations of the troublemakers in contrast to good leaders.</p> <p>Paul is now disclosing a statement that he has heard that these troublemakers entertain.</p>
Implicatures (propositional interpretation)	Paul is framing a quotation with which he does not agree that comes from a group of people whom he opposes in order to more clearly expose the character, behavior, and speech of troublemakers in Crete in stark contrast to the kinds of leaders the church needs. He is about to reveal objectionable words that have been spoken among this group.

¹⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 228.

Table 3a—Titus 1:13a-b	
Logical Forms, Explicatures, Contextual Assumptions, and Implicatures	
Logical Forms (linguistically- encoded semantic representation)	<p>ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη ἐστὶν ἀληθής, δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἔλεγε αὐτοὺς ἀποτόμως</p> <p><i>This testimony is true. On account of which reason, rebuke them severely.</i></p>
Explicatures (the proposition expressed)	<p>Paul swears upon the veracity of the evidence he has presented. The claim that Paul has just made is true; and, because the accusation that Paul has made is true, Paul orders Titus to severely convict the offending group.</p>
Contextual Assumptions (including implicated premises)	<p>Paul refers to what he has just said as a <i>testimony</i>.</p> <p>The last sentence that Paul said was clearly framed as a quotation of someone else's words.</p> <p>That sentence was proverbial, not testimonial, and it was embedded in a hearsay clause.</p> <p>Paul's own voice is heard in the framing of the Cretan quotation from which he distances himself as he mentions it.</p> <p>Paul is referring to his full claim that someone has uttered the Cretan quotation as his <i>testimony</i>.</p> <p>Context indicates that Paul describes the character and behavior of the troublemakers, which includes speaking slurs and falsehoods.</p> <p>Paul refers to his claim as an <i>accusation</i> that calls for Titus to <i>convict</i> the group from which such speech emerges.</p> <p>As a mentor who takes the health of the church seriously, this suggests that Paul objects to the sort of behavior his voice describes (i.e., dredging up old, offensive stereotypes and using them to degrade a missionary population).</p>
Implicatures (propositional interpretation)	<p>Paul objects so severely to the kind of behavior that the troublemakers engage in, exemplified by the currency of the Cretan quotation among them, that he uses the sharp, courtroom language of <i>testimony</i>, <i>accusation</i>, and <i>conviction</i> to convey the seriousness of the problem that Titus is to address and to spur commensurate action.</p>

Table 3a—Titus 1:13c-14	
Logical Forms, Explicatures, Contextual Assumptions, and Implicatures	
Logical Forms (linguistically- encoded semantic representation)	<p>ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει, μὴ προσέχοντες Ἰουδαϊκοῖς μύθοις καὶ ἐντολαῖς ἀνθρώπων ἀποστρεφομένων τὴν ἀλήθειαν.</p> <p><i>in order that they might be sound in the faith, not attending to Jewish myths and commandments of people who turn from the truth</i></p>
Explicatures (the proposition expressed)	<p>The envisioned result of the aforementioned corrective action toward the group that concerns Paul includes being healthy in faith, which contrasts with paying attention to Jewish myths and paying attention to the commandments of people who turn from the truth.</p>
Contextual Assumptions (including implicated premises)	<p>A result is a change in circumstances; therefore, the previous state of the relevant group probably contrasts in significant ways from that envisioned.</p> <p>Both of the behaviors that Paul thinks would end as a result of the rebuke explicitly involve religio-cultural interests of a Jewish nature (<i>Jewish myths, commandments</i>), so the behaviors that Paul objects to and wants Titus to correct emerge from such interests.</p> <p>The Cretan quotation does not suggest that its targets (ethnic Cretans) have any problem with over-adherence to <i>Jewish myths</i> and <i>commandments</i>—far from it; the very opposite seems true.</p> <p>The description of Cretans in the quotation corresponds to some Jewish sensibilities about the nature of Gentiles in the world.</p> <p>This quotation, if accepted, provides ample grounds to promote the austerity and restraint that might come from embracing Jewish religious culture, even if such would be contrary to Paul’s gospel.</p> <p>Therefore, the rebuke is aimed at such people as might hold to and advance the contents of the quotation; namely, troublemakers, who have been described as having Jewish affinities.</p> <p>The rebuke Paul orders is meant to counteract the bigoted purveyance of the quotation and does not directly address problematic behaviors of ethnic Cretans.</p>
Implicatures (propositional interpretation)	<p>By obeying Paul and correcting those who have kept the Cretan quotation current among them, Titus will nurture healthy faith among his ethnically diverse Christian community and curb the divisive influence of status-driven doctrines that frame fellow-believers as aliens and inferiors on the basis of empty (ματαιο-1:10; 3:9) and misguided (φρεναπάτης, 1:10) comparisons of value.</p>

Interpretation involves a complex combination of implicit and explicit information, and the logical form provides only an *indication* of speaker meaning. Sperber and Wilson write, “The hearer’s task is to use this indication, together with background knowledge, to

construct an interpretation of the speaker's meaning, guided by expectations of relevance raised by the utterance itself." Although abstractly, this describes Titus's task as he processed Paul's instructions. In summary form, the model above outlines this process.¹⁶¹

I now summarize key explicatures and plausible contextual assumptions that we have covered: Paul was concerned with church leadership throughout Titus 1:5–16. He had just described good leadership (1:5–9) and had moved on to address bad leadership (1:10–16). The quotative frame that Paul used (1:12a) followed directly from his succinct description of presumptive leaders (1:10–11), yielding the contextual assumption that he was about to tell Titus something that one of those people had said. The several pronouns in this context (οὗς, οἳτινες, 1:11; αὐτῶν, 1:12²; αὐτοῦς, 1:13) had no clearer referent than the troublemakers. The *prophet* was a prophet in *their* eyes, not necessarily in Paul's. Ethno-religious tensions existed in the Cretan church (or, at least, the literary representation we have of such). These tensions involved the illicit elevation of persons with Jewish affinities over against ethnic Cretans. Paul's descriptions of such corresponded to Titus's local, real-world evaluation and previous knowledge of circumstances in the Cretan church. An implicated conclusion emerges from these assumptions: It is natural to think that Titus expected Paul to address the issue of ethno-religious bigotry in the Cretan church in such a way as to shun it and chart a more peaceful way forward.

Having demonstrated how contextual assumptions critically influence interpretation and how they may be mismatched between ancient audiences and modern readers, let us consider a crucial factor that affects what readers assume—*Salience*. We will see that interpretations sometimes differ because salience differs between ancient audiences and modern readers.

II. Salience for Original Audiences versus Modern Eavesdroppers

Why has *Cretan* come to mean *reprobate* in Titus 1:12 if that is not what Paul originally intended? Here, the role of the hearer is pivotal. The *prima facie* interpretation probably has more salience for modern readers than for those in the original context, even when modern readers resist the most damaging implications of the interpretation.¹⁶² The

¹⁶¹ "Pragmatics" (2007), 481.

¹⁶² Tracy explains a critical component of Hans-Georg Gadamer's argument: "The fact is that no interpreter in any discipline approaches any text or any historical event without judgments formed by the history of the effects of the interpreter's culture." See "Interpretation (Hermeneutics)," 344. I have pointed out the effects of dubious attribution and the history of interpretation for many readers of Titus.

quotation is striking and brash; and readers who are removed from the original context, where Paul's critique of known acquaintances would have been mortifying, easily arrive at the *prima facie* interpretation, because it requires less effort for them. Such salience can put faulty interpretations on the fast-track for modern minds. Furlong makes one of her most significant points about why RT needs to be applied to literary interpretation: "Communication creates a presumption of optimal relevance. However, ... there is no guarantee that an interpretation that satisfies the reader's expectation of relevance is in fact the intended interpretation."¹⁶³ The interpretation that rewards modern-day readers with cognitive effects may not be the interpretation that gave sufficient cognitive effects to ancient readers within Titus's community and *vice versa*.

One consequence of the rapidity of natural language comprehension is that whatever is salient for a given audience tends to dominate their attention and disproportionately influence interpretation.¹⁶⁴ In contemporaneous conversations, this tendency makes communication and comprehension both effective and efficient. But, it can lead to unfortunate misunderstandings for readers who are not from the original audience. Salience, by definition, draws attention to important features of an utterance, making real-time decisions easier for the hearer. We must make the humble and critical recognition that what is salient to modern-day readers may differ from what was salient to original audiences. We can explain this difference, in part, as a result of the human mind intuitively applying normal processes of contemporaneous comprehension to the reading of (non-contemporaneous) ancient literature. Gibbs discusses the nature—rapid and unconscious—and some of the consequences of natural language comprehension:

All language interpretation takes place in real-time ranging from the first milliseconds of processing to long-term reflective analysis. This temporal continuum may roughly be divided into moments corresponding to linguistic comprehension, recognition, interpretation and appreciation.

Comprehension refers to the immediate moment-by-moment process of creating meanings for utterances. These moment-by-moment processes are mostly unconscious and involve the analysis of different linguistic information (e.g. phonology, lexical access, syntax) which, in combination

¹⁶³ "Relevance Theory," 76.

¹⁶⁴ See Furlong, "Relevance Theory." Although when she talks about *salience* she is referring to discourse prominence (138–144), she does talk about *intentional* versus *accidental* salience, which corresponds more to my usage of this relatively fluid term in RT. What corresponds more to my usage is the contrast she makes between a hearer's quest for *optimal* relevance, which she calls *exegesis*, and his alternative quest for *maximal* relevance, which she calls *eisegesis* (54–56).

with context and real-world knowledge, allows listeners/readers to figure out what an utterance means or what a speaker/author intends.¹⁶⁵

Consider the following example: After purchasing a new-to-us family vehicle, I told my wife, “I’m going to bring home the minivan.” My toddler overheard and protested when I returned with a vehicle that did not feature the Disney character Minnie Mouse. “Where’s Minnie?” she asked. The *Mouse* had more salience for her than a prefix regarding the relative size of our van in comparison to others. This innocent, even adorable, error demonstrates the effect of salience upon interpretation for intended audiences versus eavesdroppers. Kecskes Istvan explains that the salience of statements can override expectations of continuity and cause hearers to accept interpretations that are contextually incoherent.¹⁶⁶ In a conversation about transporting a family vehicle (*minivan*), salience triggers my daughter’s attention so that, for her, the conversation is about a cartoon mouse (*Minnievan*). The Cretan quotation appears in the midst of a conversation about the presumptive and disruptive behavior of troublemakers and provides an example of speech that Paul finds objectionable, but the salience of the ethnic insult causes us to ignore Paul’s agenda so that *he* becomes the bigot. Hámori Ágnes demonstrates how the salience of a statement can jar listeners into paying attention to a narrow segment of dialogue when they failed to follow the rest of the context.¹⁶⁷ Hopefully, interpreters can relinquish long-held and favored interpretations when offered historically and linguistically plausible and relevant alternatives.

Mounce observes that most people bring questions of concern to themselves when they approach the PE.¹⁶⁸ There is some validity to reading the Bible this way—for instance, as Scripture for the Christian community. It does not, however, promise to lead modern readers closer to historical meanings. Modern interests can unmoor contemporary readings from an author’s intent, especially if readers do not recognize those interests as foreign to the original conversational context.¹⁶⁹ For modern readers of the PE, the most

¹⁶⁵ Gibbs, “Intentionalist Controversy,” 196–97.

¹⁶⁶ See “The Role of Salience in Processing Pragmatic Units,” *ALH* 51 (2004): 309–24.

¹⁶⁷ Many of her examples come from political speeches. See “Illocutionary Force, Salience and Attention Management: A Social Cognitive Pragmatic Perspective,” *ALH* 57 (2010): 53–74. I discuss illocutionary force in Chapter Three.

¹⁶⁸ See *Pastoral Epistles*, x.

¹⁶⁹ I am focusing on the hearer’s role, taking speaker competence for granted. According to their abilities and preferences, speakers say what they think is relevant enough for the effort of the hearer, but the calculus does not always work. See Wilson and Sperber, “Pragmatics and Time,” 8–9. They list reasons that an utterance may be less relevant than expected. Among them: “The speaker may not have the information that the hearer

crucial questions seem to be authorship and views on women. Others, of course, exist, but several scholars identify these as at the forefront of modern concern.¹⁷⁰ It is why Dibelius and Conzelmann can read the Cretan quotation and conclude that its purpose was to preserve the ruse of Pauline authorship. Such a conclusion does not help interpreters to understand the quotation in its context—historical or literary. Preoccupied with signals of authorship, Paul’s intentions become secondary.¹⁷¹ Many readers begin with questions in their minds that likely did not concern Titus’s earliest readers, and their sensibilities are triggered by a different set of socio-cultural concerns than original audiences held. This is not to say that modern concerns or valuations of socio-historical matters are inferior to ancient ones, but simply to point out that difference can lead to divergence and, thus, dubious interpretations.

If salience, like a squirrel to a dog, can cause modern readers to attend to a different set of concerns than those that interested original audiences, we will want to understand two things to mitigate this tendency: *What factors lead to salience?* and *What can modern readers do to recover what was salient for ancient audiences?*

Means of Salience (a.k.a., Prominence)

Accessibility, intensity, and conspicuousness contribute to the salience of a concept. Within a hearer’s cognitive environment, certain contextual implications are more accessible than others. Studies of Fodorian modularity of mind have shown that people recall words more quickly when they have heard either those words or related words recently. These studies have been tested repeatedly with confirmatory results, showing that recency is a factor in making implied assumptions accessible.¹⁷² Another important factor

would find most relevant; she may be unwilling to give it, or unable to think of it at the time ... lack of time, lack of ability or stylistic preferences may prevent her expressing herself in the most economical way.”

¹⁷⁰ See, e.g., Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, x; and Collins, “Pastorals.”

¹⁷¹ Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, lviii. For them, authorship was a settled question prior to interpreting Titus.

¹⁷² Clark, along with Sperber, Wilson, and others, identify Relevance Theory with commitments to Jerry Fodor’s modularity of mind hypotheses. Clark writes, “Relevance theory is Chomskyan in that it assumes that the linguistic system is independent of other kinds of knowledge and Fodorian in that it assumes a modular architecture.” See *Relevance Theory*, 347–49. Fodorian modularity basically posits that the mind, with general but as-yet largely unexplored correlations to the brain’s neurological architecture, is made up of functional modules that accomplish discrete processes related to sound, patterns, memory, reason, etc. For explanation of the correspondence between RT and Fodor’s hypotheses as well as discussion of specific experiments, see *ibid.*, 91–97. See also Ernst-August Gutt, “Relevance and Translation,” in *In the Mind and across Minds*, Agnieszka Piskorska, *et al.*, eds. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 292–310, at 296.

in making contextual assumptions accessible is the prominence of the contextual assumption. Relevance theorists tend to use *prominence* and *salience* interchangeably; but *prominence* can have the added sense of being conspicuous or unavoidable, whereas *salience* is usually a conceptual designation.

I adapt here an illustration from Clark about the salience of a child's cut finger in determining that a speaker's utterance has to do with the results of the injury. Because the mother and the son share the assumption that the boy is wailing on account of his cut finger, the boy is poised to interpret whatever she says as relevant to this inescapably salient concern. So, if she says, *You're not going to die*, then he does not take this as an absolute prediction that he will defy the fate of all living things. Neither does he regard it simply as a *non-relevant* prediction that he will not die in the near future—although this is closer to the truth, it is otherwise *non-relevant*.¹⁷³ Rather, he understands, by way of implicature, that she is telling him that *he will not die in the near future as a result of this cut, so stop overreacting!* By her talking about death in the face of a minor flesh wound, she is echoing his overreaction ironically and thereby critiquing it. When something is prominent enough in a hearer's mind, its salience triggers contextual assumptions of relevance that factor into interpretation.¹⁷⁴

A salient concept saves a hearer time and processing effort and increases relevance; thus, when a concept is salient for an individual hearer—even though it was not expected to be so by the speaker—the risk of misinterpretation increases. The *prima facie* interpretation of Titus 1:12 leans on the salience of the quotation as an insult. It sticks out so much to modern readers that they lose track of the grammatical, topical, rhetorical, and social contexts in which it appears. In other words, its intensity as an insult increases its salience for modern audiences. The divergence between what was salient for the original audience and what is salient for a modern audience can cause interpreters to succumb to a red herring. This explains why many accept readings that, upon closer examination, appear misguided.

To illustrate, imagine the difference in the level of salience between a person speaking to you about adultery (somewhat salient) and a person accusing you of adultery

¹⁷³ I use the term *non-relevant* in place of *irrelevant* because I am speaking more technically about the failure of an interpretation to satisfy the requirements of *relevance* dictated by RT.

¹⁷⁴ For Clark's less dramatic version of the cut finger illustration, see *Relevance Theory*, 151–52. Clark explains how salience potentially decreases processing effort, thereby increasing relevance. For his discussion of factors that decrease processing effort, see his fourth chapter (123–155).

(extremely salient). For the epistle’s original audience, Paul’s mention of the insult would not have been nearly as salient as his accusation that exposed the offenses of members within their community against their fellow-believers and against Paul’s gospel. Removed from this singular ancient social context, modern readers accentuate the residual salience of the insult. In an article on race written at the popular level, Michael Shermer discusses the salience of racially prejudiced talk. He points out that “negative words have more emotional *salience* than positive words.”¹⁷⁵

Interpreters accept various *prima facie* readings; because, apart from the conversational context, the quotation itself is salient as an expressive insult. Expressives can convey a speaker’s attitude toward what she says unambiguously. They have a pragmatic effect beyond their semantic meaning; they can jar listeners by heightening emotional intensity. Suwon Yoon (also quoting Christopher Potts) explains, “The hallmark of expressives is that when uttered, they have ‘an immediate and powerful impact on the context.’”¹⁷⁶ The Cretan quotation features negative expressives, which explains why it leaps out to modern readers as salient; but, to the original audience, its salience may have been no greater than a hackneyed stereotype in comparison to the shaming effect of Paul bringing this closed-door speech to light and taking the troublemakers to court (as described above).¹⁷⁷

All of the contextual assumptions delineated above in this chapter have implications for what was salient to the ancient readers. For instance, Paul’s designation of the troublemakers as *abominable* (βδελυκτοὶ, 1:16) had strong religious overtones. It turned the tables on the Cretans’ critics. Paul used this word with a cluster of other religiously charged words to describe the true economy of *clean* (καθαρός, 1:15³) and *defiled* (μιαίνω, 1:15²). This rearrangement of religious designations exposed the troublemakers’ misalignment with Paul’s gospel. For the Cretan church, conversant with Jewish religious culture as they apparently were, the connotations of this kind of speech would have been salient. According to the troublemakers, the Cretans were unfit for Christian community and good works, but Paul strikingly reoriented the means of religious and social value on these presumptive leaders—it was *they* who were *unfit, defiled,*

¹⁷⁵ “Are We All Racists Deep Inside?” *Scientific American*, August 1, 2017.

¹⁷⁶ Yoon, “Semantic Constraint,” 48.

¹⁷⁷ In addition to the difference in the modern reader’s mind of what is salient, the modern tendency to read and interpret shorter, disconnected passages of Scripture contributes to distortions of meaning. We disallow the broader context to illuminate meaning, and we are gripped by a different set of interests.

unfaithful, abominable, and unworthy (1:15–16). With some understanding of *how* to identify what is salient, let us consider some possible ways to recover salience for original audiences.

Recovering Aspects of Salience for Ancient Readers

How can we recover what was salient for original audiences? Hermeneutical approaches that are geared toward amplifying stifled voices could be an asset to relevance-guided biblical hermeneutics. Such approaches, although sometimes thorny and suspect for other reasons, assume that the comfortable bourgeoisie modern interpreter's own intuitions are prone to self-interest and oblivious disregard for the voices of the disenfranchised.¹⁷⁸ In the ears of modern interpreters, original authors and audiences are often the last to have a hearing. Two complementary hermeneutical approaches that may illuminate the ethnically-charged text of Titus and interpretations of it have been called *hermeneutics of retrieval* and *hermeneutics of suspicion*. I call them approaches, because they are not methods in a technical sense. A common criticism of these approaches is that they lack consistency and precision when applied by various scholars.¹⁷⁹ We may use them, nevertheless, to illuminate ancient sensibilities regarding what was salient and what was relevant.

The phrase *hermeneutics of retrieval* typically refers to approaches that endeavor to give voice to populations stifled by patriarchal or, using Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's term, *kyriarchal* interpretations.¹⁸⁰ Such approaches do not need to have a pre-chosen "ideological position" by which to yield "advocacy readings."¹⁸¹ In the case of Titus, I contend that Paul's, Titus's, and the Cretans' voices have been stifled by previous hegemonic interpretations.¹⁸² In contrast to typical *retrievals*, I aim to recover these, so I

¹⁷⁸ Kune Biezeveld, along with the pioneers of "Reading Otherwise," Gerald O. West and Musa Dube, advises that it is crucial to "reckon with one's own subjectivity as a biblical scholar." See Biezeveld, "The Role of 'The Other' in the Reading of the Bible: Towards a New Roadmap for Bible Reading in the Western World," *AERBD*, 123–39, at 134. See also Gerald O. West, ed., *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*, Semeia Studies 62 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). Eric Anum encourages "the biblical interpreter to become aware of his or her own hidden preconceptions or antipathies." In the practice of "Reading Otherwise," we do this through dialogue with a culturally different person. *How else can we see our own blindspots?* See "Collaborative and Interactive Hermeneutics in Africa: Giving Dialogical Privilege in Biblical Interpretation," *AERBD*, 143–65, at 149.

¹⁷⁹ See the critique by Werner Kahl in "Growing Together: Challenges and Chances in the Encounter of Critical and Intuitive Interpreters of the Bible," *RO-W* (2007): 147–58.

¹⁸⁰ See "Feminist Studies in Religion and a Radical Democratic Ethos 1," *R&T 2* (1995): 122–44. She first coined the term in *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992).

¹⁸¹ See Richard S. Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 37.

¹⁸² Lyon encourages interpreting "from an acknowledged perspective," as opposed to the "imperial, authoritarian, paternalistic, patriarchal." See Lyon, "Sliding in All Directions," 114.

have traced some of the interpretive misdemeanors regarding Titus to assumptions introduced by the history of interpretation.

A relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic would attempt readings that are sensitized to unheard voices and ambivalent to dominant interpretations. The aim must include “the retrieval of forgotten perspectives.”¹⁸³ When David W. Tracy, a pioneer in hermeneutics of retrieval, originally spoke about the forgotten perspective of the “classic” text as the “other” that we come to encounter, what he meant largely by “retrieval” was the retrieval of the meaning of texts, liberated from the distortions of convention, interpreted through dialogue with diverse persons. Later scholars developed from Tracy a foundation for retrieving more and more nuanced layers of forgotten (not presumed) meaning.¹⁸⁴

I ask, *Whose perspective is more forgotten than that of ancient Cretan Christians?* Tracy urged that interpreters have a responsibility to recall “the subversive memories of individuals and whole peoples whose names we do not even know.”¹⁸⁵ With a hermeneutic of retrieval, we may begin to grasp the perspective of members of Titus’s Cretan church. Such a hermeneutic is especially appropriate for ethnically-charged texts, where a reader’s prejudices may increase the likelihood of distortion. Interpretations of Titus 1:12 often betray ethnography “under the influence” of previous well-meaning but dubious and unsustainable explanations. Klangwisan asserts that an RT approach to interpretation “presupposes a will to listen emphatically to the voice of the text. A hermeneutic of consent must be at work. The consenting reader agrees to follow the voice to its origins.”¹⁸⁶ Guided by RT, the close reading that I have demonstrated complements a hermeneutic of retrieval (plus consent), which may help readers gain new insights into the meaning of this text within its ancient environment.

I have applied a *hermeneutic of suspicion* to influential secondary literature on Titus that tends to favor the *othering* of the Cretans. When interpreters apply a hermeneutic of suspicion, they aim to identify when one voice is silencing the other. This silencing happens tacitly when readers reiterate conventional interpretations of the text that are salient for modern readers rather than listening carefully and sympathetically to the text

¹⁸³ Michael Barnes, “Tracy in Dialogue: Mystical Retrieval and Prophetic Suspicion,” *HeyJ* 34 (1993): 60–65, at 60.

¹⁸⁴ See *ibid.*, 60–65. See also David W. Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

¹⁸⁵ David W. Tracy, “The Dialogue of Jews and Christians: A Necessary Hope,” *Chicago Theological Seminary Register* 76 (1986): 20–28, at 23.

¹⁸⁶ *Earthing the Cosmic Queen*, 21.

itself. Applying such an approach to interpretations of Titus exposes the gravitational influence of *prima facie* readings. Given that the silencing of the other seems to be happening most clearly at the level of the secondary literature, I have critically examined several major interpretations of the Cretan quotation and its context. Applying a hermeneutic of suspicion to interpretations requires one to hold the conclusions of secondary literature and modern readers, including one's own, tentatively.¹⁸⁷

Interpreters of Titus need to be questioned concerning their so readily reading *othering* speech into the text.¹⁸⁸ Consider how these interpretations would sound to those who are disparaged. Several commentators want to come to the defense of those insulted from the onslaught of Paul's bigotry, but their assumptions and proclivities do not allow them to consider whether Paul was acting in their defense in the first place.¹⁸⁹ I contend that this history of interpretation has been too satisfied with the scenario of a presumptive and uncouth biblical pseudonym uttering off-handed (yet somehow sophisticated and poetic) slurs to hear Paul coming to the defense of Cretan believers by exposing and rebuking bigotry. In the words of Tracy, pioneer in the hermeneutics of retrieval, "Retrieval now demands both critique and suspicion."¹⁹⁰

A hermeneutic of retrieval can assist in hearing the lost voice of the Cretan missionary congregation. Much of the writing on hermeneutics of retrieval regards feminist and postcolonial interpretation, and other attempts to listen for unheard voices in the biblical text have been growing in currency among scholars for a generation. The aim of retrieval is not to obscure Scripture's plain meaning or to acquire justice for the oppressed in spite of or in contradiction to the message of the Bible. Rather, it attempts to interpret Scripture more equitably toward persons without the power to attain peace or justice on their own behalf. It is based on two assumptions: first, the concerns of the

¹⁸⁷ Tracy articulates the rationale for retrieval being crucial to interpretation, which is why Titus 1:12 must be examined in this way: "No classic text comes to us without the plural and ambiguous history of effects of its own production and all its former receptions ... Plurality seems an adequate word to suggest the extraordinary variety which any study of language shows ... Ambiguity may be too mild a word to describe the strange mixture of great good and frightening evil that our history reveals." See "Dialogue," 20–28, at 24.

¹⁸⁸ See Biezeveld, "Role of 'The Other,'" 129. For her, listening to "the other" means "hearing of the voice from an unfamiliar context and an unfamiliar perspective which disturbs what is familiar."

¹⁸⁹ E.g., Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 139; Stegemann, "Anti-Semitic and Racist," 288–91, *et passim*; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 190. Twomey contends that Raymond Collins downplays the force of Paul's bigotry. See Twomey, *Pastoral Epistles*, 192. Ronald Charles is certainly both vulgar and extreme when he writes that the Apostle Paul is no less than "a rapist of the nations." Quoted in Don Garlington, review of *Paul and the Politics of Diaspora*, by Ronald Charles, *RBL* [<http://www.bookreviews.org>] 2016.

¹⁹⁰ "Dialogue," 26.

powerless are typically stifled in human enterprises at meaning-making; and, second, peace and justice for the powerless is what is lacking in the absence of peace and justice globally.

Many scholars involved in hermeneutics of retrieval point to Tracy as a pioneer in constructive theology and in the recognition that interpretation requires dialogue.¹⁹¹ The approach may be open to criticism, but it deserves a hearing as interpreters recognize that more conventional critical interpretations are not themselves without bias.¹⁹² Using this approach, we may discern whether Paul's genuine voice has been stifled by our history of interpretation, rather than by the "Paul" of Titus, and perhaps whether this Paul is actually speaking up on behalf of the Cretans.

To increase the likelihood of capturing what was salient for original audiences and to diminish the volume of what is prominent for modern readers, we must become aware of ourselves as eavesdroppers into an ancient conversation. When we have a strong reaction to a statement, we can examine why, rather than assume that we are responding as original audiences would have. What we find most scintillating may not be what interested them. This is where a hermeneutic of retrieval, when applied sympathetically, can aid our recovery and interpretation of voices stifled by a contentious, confusing, or convoluted history of interpretation. We hear scintillating vulgarity in Titus 1:12, whereas they heard loss of honor as troublemakers were exposed. In Chapter Three, we now turn to examine such emotional and social outcomes of speech as scintillation and loss of honor and other *Non-Propositional Dimensions of Communication*.

¹⁹¹ With hope for the peace-making implications of such efforts, Tracy writes, "Seething beneath that great grey western virtue of reasoned public discourse is, I believe, the desire really to hear one another once again and the passion to overhear together the still disclosive and emancipatory power of the Christian tradition." See David W. Tracy, "Modes of Theological Argument," *ThTo* 33 (1977): 387–95, at 395.

¹⁹² E.g., Jeremy Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation: Reframing Paul*, *Studies in Theology and Religion* 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 48, 109, 150, *et passim*.

Chapter Three – The Non-Propositional Dimensions of Communication

The end products of relevance-guided interpretation thus far have been more clearly articulated *propositions*. The final insight that I will cover involves the recognition that speech has purposes beyond even the most lucid propositions. Some biblical scholars have taken interest in the contribution that Speech-Act Theory (SAT) makes to understanding some of the non-propositional dimensions of communication. As Relevance theorists endeavor to offer a comprehensive account of communication that incorporates these dimensions, they frequently rely on the grammar of SAT to describe features of language they observe.

Whereas previous chapters featured detailed examinations of words and phrases, ideas and their relationships in Titus, this chapter concerns the broader paraenetic thrust of the book and of Paul's use of the Cretan quotation. When one reads Titus according to the insight that communication inherently involves non-propositional dimensions, one recognizes that Paul aimed to affect readers not merely at the level of what they thought. As I address particulars of Titus below, I argue that Paul aimed directly at life-change, not by arguing from proposition to behavioral implication. For him, *sound doctrine* was not simply a motivation or rationale for good behavior; *sound doctrine* entails it.

I. The Relevance of Speech-Act Theory

Language does more than inform. It affects minds and changes circumstances.¹ The task of interpretation is not complete when the hearer has simply enriched the informational content and extracted a set of truth-conditional propositions from an utterance. Pragmatics examines the real-world implications of speech as well as how humans intuit meaning from incomplete representations. Carston indicates that Grice's *what is said* is the truth-conditional content of an utterance, whereas *what is implicated* is its pragmatic content.² *Pragmatic* has two senses here. All along we have been referring to the processes of *pragmatic inference* to derive meaning from utterances; this is usually rendered in an enriched propositional form. This chapter focuses on how speech has *pragmatic effects*

¹ As Briggs puts it, "Text and action are bound together, we might say, in the reader." See *Virtuous Reader*, 211.

² See Carston, "Truth-Conditional Semantics," 284–85.

upon the world beyond the discourse. That is, how language—and Paul’s language in Titus, specifically—affects real-world circumstances, not just how ideas relate to one another.

The meaning of speech is not only shaped by its context(s), but it alters its context(s)—not only the discursive context but also the social, legal, religious, and economic. Because these are real-world effects, the output of pragmatic processes are not merely propositional, and utterances do not strictly or simply convey information. An interpreter who can expound the propositional meaning of an utterance is still not finished. Propositions may be descriptions of either real-world or imaginary circumstances, but they are “fictitious entities” in that they are ideological and conceptual.³ To the extent that they can exist solely in the mind, whether an “interpretation” is correct or incorrect (i.e., corresponds to the speaker’s intentions or not) is inconsequential. Such abstractions, as detailed as they may be, can proliferate, but hearers properly evaluate them when their real-world effects correlate to what they ascertain of the speaker’s intent. Pragmatics attempts to account for the full force of utterances.

Speech-Act theorists provide a useful grammar for the concepts necessary to discuss this full force. Relevance theorists have adopted some of this grammar, so we will briefly consider the development of SAT and its relation to Relevance. John L. Austin, credited with the initial conception of SAT, argued that there were two kinds of speech—descriptive and performative. Austin’s most developed thoughts on the topic, based on his lectures at Oxford and then at Harvard, were published posthumously in *How to Do Things with Words*.⁴ John R. Searle, one of Austin’s students, became the chief heir and developer of SAT afterwards. Searle built on what Austin was unable to finish. He is responsible for the more precise, albeit (some have argued) tangential, articulations of SAT.⁵ That theorists since have noted some of the discontinuities between Austin and Searle is a fact that does not concern us, because I am only highlighting the insights of SAT that are most pertinent to my exploration of RT as it relates to Titus.

Among the most useful insights for understanding the real-world dimensions of language, Austin and Searle have provided definitions for what they called the locutionary,

³ See Austin, “Meaning of a Word,” 60–61.

⁴ Austin, *How to Do Things*. The first edition was published in 1962, two years after his death.

⁵ Important works by John R. Searle include *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

illocutionary, and perlocutionary forces of speech. A brief definition of each and their inter-relationship adequately illuminates the aspect of communication that concerns us here.⁶

Locution: the utterance of a sentence with determinate sense and reference⁷

Illocution: the making of a statement, offer, promise, etc. in uttering a sentence, by virtue of the conventional *force* associated with it

Perlocution: the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effects being special to the circumstances of utterance

According to Austin, a speaker saying virtually anything coherent achieves a *locutionary act*. *Illocutionary* acts are directly achieved by the conventional forces associated with an utterance; so, for instance, an utterance following the formal conventions of an oath made in an appropriate context achieves an oath that is legally or socially binding.⁸ The distinction between illocutionary and *perlocutionary* acts is important. SAT differentiates acts that are accomplished by virtue of speaking from acts that are accomplished in consequence of or in response to the utterance. A speaker's comprehensive intention for an utterance includes appropriate perlocutionary results, but theorists generally draw the line between illocution and perlocution at the direct agency of the speaker. Austin uses an intuitive "hereby" test. Whatever the speaker may add "hereby" to is the illocutionary act accomplished by the agency of the speaker, whereas whatever intentions the speaker wishes her utterance to accomplish that sound absurd when adding "hereby" may be perlocutionary acts that depend upon a listener's uptake.⁹ For example, observe the distinction between the two following sentences:

1A: I *hereby* argue my point.

1B: I *hereby* convince you of my point.

The distinction between the first and the second sentences is the presence or absence of uptake. This differentiates illocution and perlocution. Discussing the insights of SAT for a "relevance-oriented pragmatics," Sperber and Wilson explain that speakers implicitly convey a "recommended" attitude toward their utterances. The hearer may not adopt this

⁶ Definitions based on Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 236.

⁷ "Determinate sense and reference" is a crucial phrase, because Austin constructed his theory from the ground up regarding components of language (starting with noises, *phones*). Fuller forms of speech included a number of the more basic undeveloped components. So, e.g., every illocution must involve locution. For the building blocks of these simpler components, see lectures VII and VIII; *How to Do Things*, 83–108.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 109–20, Lecture IX. See also Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 237.

⁹ Austin, *How to Do Things*, 53–66, Lecture V.

recommendation, but to understand the utterance properly is to understand this recommendation.¹⁰ Consider now the following pair of sentences:

2A: I *hereby* order you to wash the dishes.

2B: I *hereby* wash the dishes.

This example represents the explicature that the speaker intends for the hearer to wash the dishes, but it goes beyond perlocution by requiring response. Perlocution involves uptake, which is not strictly voluntary. As within any discipline, Speech-Act theorists exhibit some diversity, but Levinson argues that, from the perspective of pragmatics, the most plausible version makes two basic claims: First, “All utterances not only serve to express propositions but also perform actions.”¹¹ Second, the “privileged level of action,” that is, the action directly accomplished by speaking, “can be called the illocutionary act.”¹² Perlocutionary acts are essentially indirect, but they are, nevertheless, of prime importance to any speaker.

Austin’s observations and proposals are not only helpful for understanding what speech *does*, Serban points out that they influenced “the pragmatic turn” in linguistics.¹³ That is, they were part of the wave of late-twentieth-century linguistic thinking that shifted away from objective-representational and toward subjective-hermeneutical ways of analyzing language; that recognized the active dimensions of speech beyond information transfer; and that saw communication as negotiation, a cooperation between parties, and not essentially comprised of semantics and syntactics.¹⁴ Levinson argues, however, that SAT is now superfluous to a comprehensive pragmatic theory. He is among those who now consider all valid claims of SAT to have been subsumed under some aspect of Pragmatics.¹⁵ In large measure, the kinds of speech acts correlate to grammatical and lexical features of language. For example, “Please” associates with requests. This link to form makes it difficult for Relevance theorists to accommodate speech acts as a separate and necessary component of language. Clark explains that the dependence of SAT upon

¹⁰ See “Pragmatics” (2007), 491–92.

¹¹ Summarized in Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 243. Whereas Austin maintained a distinction (albeit imprecise) between performative and constative language uses, Searle’s development of speech act theory regarded virtually every use of language to have performative dimensions; therefore, Levinson’s characterization of speech act theory as regarding all speech to be performative (above) depends upon what some might argue is an overextension of Austin’s original theory. See Briggs, *Words in Action*, 63–66.

¹² Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 243.

¹³ Serban, “Gricean Pragmatics and Text Linguistics,” 96–97.

¹⁴ Austin uses and critiques “semantics and syntactics.” See “Meaning of a Word,” *passim*.

¹⁵ See *Pragmatics*, 226–83.

conventional (i.e., formal) aspects of language prevent it from full acceptance within RT, which conscientiously focuses on inferential aspects of language.¹⁶ There would be no need for a separate theory if, properly understood, a robust pragmatic theory such as RT includes all features of language that SAT accounts for. Sperber and Wilson find concepts from SAT useful, but they acknowledge that the theory tends to depend on encoded signals such as normal grammar (e.g., imperatives and interrogatives) and “illocutionary force indicators,” which are basically formal. Such aspects of language would be circumscribed within a fulsome “relevance-oriented pragmatic” theory.¹⁷

Three main reasons have been posited for understanding RT as a comprehensive model without including SAT as a separate and necessary discipline. First, RT has its own account for the linguistic phenomena about which SAT makes claims. Even when one embraces the underlying concepts of SAT and the basic tenet that *words do things*, Sperber and Wilson point out that one still needs a robust, relevance-oriented theory of pragmatic inference to “resolve illocutionary indeterminacies” and “in order to decide what speech act the speaker intended to perform.”¹⁸

Second, SAT is too connected to formal features of language, such as lexemes and syntax, to be useful in the domain that RT endeavors to account for—namely, the underdeterminacy of language. Discussing developments and limitations in SAT, Sperber and Wilson point out that the syntax of sentences is frequently ambiguous with regard to the kind of contextual force they have, thus necessitating a theory of pragmatic inference.¹⁹ If the space that Relevance theorists have carved for themselves in linguistics has to do with the underdetermined aspects of language, then the coupling of form and function that is typical of SAT renders it unnecessary. Levinson explains that the most viable forms of SAT are those that tether form to function (e.g., an imperative sentence illocutes a command; an interrogative sentence constitutes a request for information), although room for *special uses* exists. He critiques several forms of SAT, and he preserves what he sees as their most valuable insights for pragmatics.²⁰

Third, SAT is not a unified theory of language that even seeks to account for all aspects of usage; it is, therefore, inherently supplemental (some theorists attempting to

¹⁶ See *Relevance Theory*, 210.

¹⁷ See “Pragmatics” (2007), 491–93.

¹⁸ “Pragmatics, Modularity and Mind-Reading,” *M&L* 17.1/2 (2002): 3–23, at 4.

¹⁹ See *Pragmatics*, 4. Given this, they surmise, “Speech act theory may turn out to be much less central to pragmatics than many people have supposed” (26).

²⁰ See *Pragmatics*, 226–83.

provide a comprehensive account of language by means of the theory notwithstanding). SAT generally divides speech into two kinds—description and indication—and focuses explanations on the second. Even if the narrow domain is appropriate, Sperber and Wilson still observe that “not all indicators are analysable in speech act terms.”²¹ The observations and proposals of Speech-Act theorists are still worth consideration even if another, presumably comprehensive, system now accounts for them in its own terms. Although major proponents of RT see SAT as already entailed in RT (and hence superfluous), Relevance theorists, nevertheless, continue to use the terms and concepts developed in SAT, because thinking about speech in terms of locution, illocution, and perlocution has clarity and explanatory power.

What speakers *do* with words is just as critical as the propositional content of their utterances. They may inform hearers; they may instruct hearers; they may ask hearers; they may pronounce true what only becomes true in the act of pronouncing (e.g., *I take thee to be my lawfully wedded husband*); and so forth. In Chapter One under *The Speaker’s Attitude*, I discussed *disassociation*—when a speaker utters a sentence that she distances herself from and attributes it to someone else implicitly or explicitly. The effectiveness of this behavior depends upon communication involving more than the conveyance of information through the meanings of words.²² Focusing only on the semantic values or the propositional content that speech encodes neglects a major aspect of what language does. Language argues; language instructs; language influences, commands, and requests; language pronounces, comforts, and heals; language convicts and offends; language creates. So, communication is not strictly (if even primarily) about information transfer. Echoing Austin’s seminal title in a Relevance-theoretical context, Yan Huang cogently observes the truth that “Language is a way of doing things with words.”²³ He pronounces the axiom in a context where he is highlighting an example of this claim—the specific concern of *critical pragmatics*, which illuminates the power of language to consolidate and

²¹ “Pragmatics” (2007), 492–94. Briggs discusses the debate among speech act theorists on whether and how the theory may be a comprehensive theory of language. See *Words in Action*, 69–70.

²² For a classic treatment of the question whether words carry meanings, see Austin, “Meaning of a Word.” Briggs summarizes Searle’s taxonomy to include “Assertives, Directives, Commissive, Expressives, Declarations, and Assertive Declarations.” I do not use this technical language for two main reasons: 1) My main interest in the non-propositional dimensions of communication is not limited to illocution. 2) Theorists have proposed other schemas, and Briggs questions the warrant for privileging Searle’s. *Words in Action*, 51.

²³ Huang, “Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics,” 145.

abuse power, liberate or subvert. Communication has only done its job when the environment has changed.²⁴ Put symbolically, $context^1 + utterance = context^2$.

In order to grasp the non-propositional dimensions of Titus 1:12 and its context, we must understand *The Economy of Cognitive Effects* (immediately below), including the factors that affect processing effort and the potential of non-literal utterances to offer substantial effects for their added processing cost. We must also understand the intrinsic paraenetic quality of ostensive inferential speech, including its social outcomes and the ethical and redemptive nature of *sound doctrine* in Titus.

II. The Economy of Cognitive Effects

Relevance theorists refer to the results of interpretation as *cognitive effects*.²⁵ These constitute small or large changes in the hearer's mind, the conversational context, and even the social context. The cognitive effects, for instance, of the sentence *Will you marry me?* spoken in the proper circumstances and rightly interpreted are profound, whereas those of *You want fries with that?* are slightly less so.

An utterance conveys both the speaker's informative *and* communicative intent—not only what she is saying but why she is saying it. Utterances do not just answer the question, *What are you telling me?* but, crucially, *Why are you telling me?* The answer to this second question does not have to be separately articulated; it is implicit in the utterance and its situational context.

The following example highlights the insufficiency of semantics-based interpretation to capture the full thrust of utterances: We could render the propositional content of the sentence *Are you sure?* apart from the interrogative mode of the sentence, as *[addressee] is (state of being) sure (i.e., confident)*. A semantically oriented interpretation might lead one to expect that the sentence is normally used either to reinforce (declarative force) or ascertain (interrogative force) confidence. It is quite normal, however, for speakers to use this sentence, even with the form and inflection of a question, in order to interject or express doubt (illocutions). Speakers often use it rhetorically to cast or cause doubt (perlocution) when they intend to nudge a listener to reconsider his position.

²⁴ Bonnycastle states, "Language does not merely represent the world, it also organizes the world." See *In Search of Authority*, 122. See also Furlong's comments on this issue in literary theory from Bonnycastle's earlier work in Furlong, "Relevance Theory," 12.

²⁵ See, e.g., Sperber and Wilson, "Pragmatics" (2007), 473. Furlong discusses several socially affective examples. See "Relevance Theory," 63–68.

Gibbs surveyed research into the influence of speaker intention upon hearers, especially what aspects of utterance interpretation formed lasting memories. He wrote, “Many studies have shown that people are very likely to remember a pragmatic implication of an utterance rather than the utterance itself or what it directly asserts or logically implies.”²⁶ The *cognitive effects* that result from comprehension, according to RT, are not identical to the propositional forms that derive from a process of interpretation. As Gibbs found, these non-propositional effects constitute the real takeaway of communication.

Speaking in economic terms, Sperber and Wilson summarize as follows:

“Cognitive efficiency, like any other kind of efficiency, is a matter of striking the best possible balance between costs and benefits.”²⁷ They outline the following “Relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure:

(a) Follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects. In particular, test interpretive hypotheses (disambiguations, reference resolutions, implicatures, etc.) in order of accessibility.

(b) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied.”²⁸

Hearers are justified in stopping once their expectations of relevance have been met, because an expectation of relevance implicitly involves a presumption of economy. This usually leads to successful natural language communication, but a mismatch between what seems relevant to a reader who is far removed from the initial context and what seems relevant to the original audience can short-circuit this process. We will now briefly look at the basic kinds of cognitive effects and what makes utterances economical.

Three Basic Types of Cognitive Effects and Their Impact on the Cretan Church

Let our understanding of the kinds of cognitive effects hearers might derive begin with human intuition. To enumerate natural types of cognitive effects, Green quotes Wilson and Sperber:

When is an input relevant? Intuitively, an input (a sight, a sound, an utterance, a memory) is relevant to an individual when it connects with background information he has available to yield conclusions that matter to him: say, by answering a question he has in mind, improving his knowledge

²⁶ Gibbs, “Intentionalist Controversy,” 186.

²⁷ Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics, Modularity and Mind-Reading,” 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 18; This is a standard description, invoked by almost all relevance theorists. See, e.g., reiterations in Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 37, 69, 120; Gibbs and Tendahl, “Cognitive Effort and Effects,” 381, 386; Gutt, “Relevance and Translation,” 299–300.

on a certain topic, settling a doubt, confirming a suspicion, or correcting a mistaken impression.²⁹

The possibilities listed above correspond to a standard set of three categories of positive cognitive effects. Clark summarizes them as follows: 1) contextual implication, 2) strengthening an existing assumption, and 3) contradicting an existing assumption.³⁰

Uchida and Carston define the first category, *contextual implication*, as “a conclusion inferred on the basis of a set of premises consisting of both contextual assumptions and new assumptions derived from the incoming stimulus ... and not derivable from either of these alone.”³¹ The other two are specific outcomes of the first. Biblical interpreters must keep in mind that, just as I have shown with cognitive environment and salience, mismatches between original audiences versus modern readers can exist with respect to cognitive effects.

Paul’s audience might derive all three kinds of cognitive effects as a result of his mentioning the Cretan quotation in Titus 1:12. First, one *contextual implication* might be that Titus and other sanctioned leaders need to take stern action (1:9, 13) with respect to bullies in the church (cf. *πλήκτης*, *bully*, 1:7). Second, Paul also might have spurred action by *strengthening an existing assumption* of Titus that presumptive leaders were having too great a negative impact in the community (*upsetting whole houses*, 1:11). Third, Paul mentioning the quotation plausibly *contradicted existing assumptions*, such as the following: Paul did not know about the troublemakers’ behaviors and influence;³² Paul was not concerned about this congregation’s troubles; these presumptive leaders could get away with upsetting the church through their bigotry. These were mistaken notions.

Being corrected about a misconception has a strong cognitive effect, and here it had implications for their social context. These cognitive effects are positive in the sense that the hearer experiences a net gain in the accuracy of his perception of the world, although they may have negative emotions associated with them, since being in the wrong does not feel good. These cognitive effects coincide with propositional forms derived from Paul’s

²⁹ Green, “Relevance Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” 268. He is quoting from Wilson and Sperber, “Relevance Theory,” in *Handbook of Pragmatics*, 2004, 208.

³⁰ See *Relevance Theory*, 364.

³¹ *Relevance Theory*, 296.

³² We know that news, even about very sensitive matters, could get back to the Apostle Paul (e.g., 1 Cor 5:1).

utterances, but they reach beyond *informing* his audience to *affecting* his audience. We will now address the question: *What makes cognitive effects economical?*³³

Factors That Affect Processing Cost

According to Sperber and Wilson, RT holds that hearers arrive at the best interpretation of an utterance by “process[ing] it in such a way as to maximize the number of its contextual implications and minimize the processing cost of deriving them.”³⁴ Therefore, assuming that hearers will acquire the cognitive effects that correspond economically to their level of effort, a crucial question is, *What factors make an utterance require more effort to process or less?* Wilson and Sperber explain,

The processing effort required to understand an utterance depends on two main factors: the form in which it is presented (audibility, legibility, dialect, register, syntactic complexity and familiarity of constructions all affect processing effort); and the effort of memory and imagination needed to construct a suitable context.³⁵

Several specific considerations fall under their two broad headings that have special pertinence with reference to biblical interpretation. We will examine more closely the following three narrower considerations: 1) the level of complexity of the utterance, 2) the size of the context, and 3) the accessibility of necessary concepts in the hearer’s cognitive environment. By adjusting these factors, speakers can make utterances economical in various ways. By neglecting them, interpreters can distort meaning.

Professional jargon allows communicators within a field to abbreviate utterances and relate packets of dense information to one another more economically as long as speakers and hearers are able to access basically the same concepts. Even if those packets of information stand in for complexly layered ideas, the relations between them can be simple. Jargon is essentially a collection of preset ways of referring to more complex concepts. With Titus and the other PE, the recurrence and strategic importance of the expressions *piety*, *prudence*, and *sound doctrine* suggest that Paul and his colleagues had preset notions about the complexes they labelled as such.³⁶

³³ Theorists occasionally use economic terms to refer to the relationship between processing effort and cognitive effects. See, e.g., Sperber and Wilson, *Pragmatics*, 31; and Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 105, 110.

³⁴ “Pragmatics” (1981), 283.

³⁵ “Pragmatics and Time,” 8–9.

³⁶ Some works draw out the historical significance of this shorthand. E.g., on *piety* (εὐσεβεία), see Hoklotubbe, *Civilized Piety*; Angela Standhartinger, “Eusebeia in Den Pastoralbriefen: Ein Beitrag Zum Einfluss Römischen Denkens Auf Das Entstehende Christentum,” *NovT* 48 (2006): 51–82; on *prudence* (σωφροσύνη), see Thomas E. Bird, “Exegetical Notes: Self-Control (ΣΩΦΡΟΣΥΝΗ),” *CBQ* 2 (1940): 259–63. We will consider *sound doctrine* below.

As pertains to reducing complexity and context size, Sperber and Wilson suggest, “One way of economizing on the costs of linguistic processing is to leave unstated any contextual assumptions that the hearer can be expected to supply for himself.”³⁷ This serves to decrease the size and detail of an utterance, but it depends upon the speaker accurately assessing the access her hearer will have to necessary contextual assumptions. According to Sperber and Wilson, two results obtain, when a speaker requires her hearer to search a *broader* verbal context for clues as to her intention: first, the quantity of implications of possible meanings increases along with the resources for ascertaining speaker intent; and, second, processing costs increase, thus potentially decreasing relevance.³⁸ Modern readers are less concerned about the second result, because they are not restricted to live processing. Awareness of the first result, however, leads us to examine Titus 1:12 on the basis of its book and corpus contexts, because they supply a number of clues as to possible meaning that are less clear from only the verse or paragraph. Furlong explains a key reason for interpreters, especially of literature, to examine the broader context of a work: “Varying interpretations can be partly evaluated by the degree to which they account for all the evidence of the work in a way that is plausible.”³⁹ At the same time, we deliberately focus on the narrower paragraph and section contexts, increasing our likelihood of finding a relevant interpretation. Thus, we examine what clues from the broader book context of Titus help to interpret the Cretan quotation and what the narrower context of 1:5–16 suggests about Paul’s intentions.

When the readily-accessible interpretation of an utterance comes to mind, all other lines of interpretation are disallowed.⁴⁰ By way of analogy, *Why are your lost keys always in the last place you look?*⁴¹ An easily accessible anaphoric interpretation of the pronouns in Titus 1:12 would render other, more labor-intensive, interpretations unlikely. Yet, under the influence of a history of interpretation that assumes Paul is quoting directly from a specific ancient poet, readers accept the reference as cataphoric, even though it would require more processing effort in a natural language context. Under these circumstances, modern readers have to exert more processing effort to counteract the assumptions of interpretive history.

³⁷ *Pragmatics*, 31.

³⁸ See Sperber and Wilson, “Pragmatics” (1981), 284. They label this broadening of the search for clues and implications of relevance “evocational processing.”

³⁹ See Furlong, “Relevance Theory,” 37.

⁴⁰ See Wilson and Sperber, “Pragmatics and Time,” 14–15.

⁴¹ *Because that is the first place you find them.*

Whatever makes a given utterance relevant for an audience (i.e., whatever reading yields satisfactory cognitive effects) will cause the audience to stop seeking an alternative interpretation. The closer the audience is to the context of the speaker, the more likely it is that they will come up with her intended meaning. The original audience that Paul had in mind probably grasped something close to his intended meaning. Modern interpreters, on the other hand, distanced by many intervening years, may have a difficult time coming up with an interpretation that was readily accessible to Paul's initial audience.⁴² The economy of cognitive effects is thus impacted by the convenience of an interpretation, which can be affected not only by natural linguistic factors like conceptual salience but also by anachronistic "givens" and interpretative preunderstandings. Now let us consider how non-literal language seems to defy the economy of cognitive effects.

The Potency of Non-Literal Utterances

Even though non-literal uses of language can be more complex than more literal uses in that they require second-order thinking, they can also produce greater cognitive effects, which makes them potentially quite economical. Theorists generally do not consider literal and figurative uses of language to occupy two exclusive categories; they occupy, rather, a sliding scale. The implicatures of a sentence uttered figuratively are a subset of the sentence's total possible implicatures; so, as soon as the hearer knows that the speaker is using figurative language, he begins to access a shorter list of possible meanings. Hearers are typically able to make these determinations in real time, diminishing the otherwise heavier processing cost of metaphorical speech and making figurative language quite potent, as long as the speaker makes a reasonably accurate judgment about the hearer's uptake capacity.⁴³

Because he assumed that literalism was the default mode of speech, Grice described the process of interpreting figurative speech as requiring extra steps and, thereby, more effort.⁴⁴ Although theorists now generally think that his two-step comprehension model inadequately reflects the online processing of natural language, his intuitions about

⁴² See Wilson and Sperber, "Pragmatics and Time," 15–17.

⁴³ See Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 253–79.

⁴⁴ Grice describes various kinds of non-literal speech under the rubric of "flouting the maxims," which intrinsically involves the hearer in extra effort to process, because the speaker has not (at the surface level) behaved cooperatively. Grice explains that the hearer, nevertheless, assumes cooperation and proceeds to interpret *as though* the speaker has acted cooperatively. See "Logic and Conversation," 52–56.

the increased effort that figurative speech requires were not completely wrong.⁴⁵ Adults are able to process metaphor and irony more successfully than children, suggesting that it is a skill humans learn through effort. The pay-off of cognitive effects motivates them.⁴⁶ Studies of language acquisition suggest that non-literal speech requires more processing effort but not because it is a two-step process. It is still quick, but adult speakers are not as easily derailed from on-line processing by words coming from disparate semantic domains. Gibbs, referencing empirical research on the comprehension of non-literal and ironic language use, argues that evidence points to humans having a streamlined process for comprehending utterances that convey meaning beyond their linguistically-encoded content:

There is a tremendous amount of research in psycholinguistics to show that readers can determine speakers' figurative meanings without having to first analyse the literal or sentence meanings of metaphors, sarcasm, indirect speech acts, and so on.... The speed with which readers are able to interpret figurative expressions suggests that the recovery of speakers' intentions occurs very early in the course of comprehension.⁴⁷

Accordingly, audiences can leap to the short list of relevant figurative meanings quite efficiently.

Although figurative speech may require more processing effort, literal speech does not always offer the more economical means of communicating. There are two reasons: First, literal language can require details that are unnecessary and clumsy if a metaphor can replace an entire concept, making the leap to second-order thinking less burdensome. Second, figurative language—irony or metaphor, for instance—can have profound cognitive effects, making its additional processing effort worthwhile. Some of these effects correlate to more visceral, emotional, social, or psychosocial experiences for the listener.

Grice argued that the assumption of co-operation and the maxim of relevance helped listeners to track with speaker meaning, even when speakers failed to observe (i.e., *flouted*) other maxims (e.g., quality, quantity, and manner). Flouting the maxims, as he referred to it, was a means of increasing what Relevance theorists would later call

⁴⁵ For an explanation of what is meant by comprehension being “online,” see Gibbs and Tendahl, “Cognitive Effort and Effects,” 385–86. They argue that the increased cognitive effects of figurative language make additional effort worthwhile. They do not claim that figurative speech *must* require more effort.

⁴⁶ See consistent, tentative findings under “Relevance Theory Responses to the Experimental Evidence” in *ibid.*, 382–85.

⁴⁷ Gibbs, “Intentionalist Controversy,” 191.

cognitive effects for listeners.⁴⁸ Relevance theorists agree upon the pivotal importance of relevance for ensuring comprehension. Nevertheless, the scheme he proposed required a two-step process in the hearer's mind—first, the hearer detects a violation of conversational maxims, then he decodes the meaning through a secondary process. The hearer rejects a literal interpretation before arriving at and accepting a non-literal one.⁴⁹ Grice's delineation of the process may be logically helpful, but Huang argues that it is probably too complex to accurately explain what happens in the process of natural language comprehension. The problem, as Huang identifies it, was that Grice assumed that literalism was the default mode of speech.⁵⁰

Literary analysis may exhibit this two-step process, especially with discourse in a non-original setting, but natural language communicators process too rapidly to assume that this is the best explanation of how they comprehend non-literal uses. Perhaps, the key difference between live speech and writing, when both are viewed as ostensive inferential communication, seems almost too obvious—the amount of time one has for interpretation. Aside from this difference, which permits eyes to return where ears cannot, Furlong explains that “many of the problems besetting theories of critical practice are the result of assuming that spontaneous utterance comprehension is somehow unrelated to the interpretation of literary works.”⁵¹ Readers form enduring opinions as quickly as hearers. A hearer knows almost immediately whether a speaker is speaking non-literally, the moment she hears the word *ox* or *ass* in the sentences *You're an ox* or *You're an ass*. It is normally virtually a one-step process. The same is true when Paul's original listeners heard him refer to one of the troublemakers as a *prophet* (Titus 1:12) or to his own report as a *testimony* (1:13) or to the doctrines of the troublemakers as *commandments* (1:14). In analyzing an ancient text, we slow the process of comprehension down, parse it out logically, and note in a far more conscious way than natural language hearers do where a word or concept falls on a scale of relative literalism.

Paul's uses of *prophet*, *testimony*, and *commandment* (among other words) were figurative, but not as a departure from some presumed literal norm. Speakers use language literally, figuratively, or loosely as needed in order to produce the most appropriate results

⁴⁸ See, especially, Grice's delineation of the “Group C” class of seemingly uncooperative utterances in “Logic and Conversation,” 52–56. Grice does not speak in terms of “cognitive effects.” He refers to flouting utterances as being more “striking” or superlative in some way. This correlates to RT's “cognitive effects.”

⁴⁹ See Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 109–10.

⁵⁰ See Huang, “Micro- and Macro-Pragmatics.”

⁵¹ “Relevance Theory,” 52–53.

(i.e., the greatest cognitive effects) that they can in their audiences. The communicative principle of relevance refers to “a presumption of ... optimal relevance.” Inferences based on this presumption depend on the communicator’s preferences and abilities.⁵² Paul’s metaphorical language may have required additional processing effort; but it was worthwhile because of the effects listeners derived, including mortification, intimacy, trust, and humor.

Consider how dramatic these figurative uses of language are in Titus, how they build on the *pathos* of the preceding discourse, and how they lead to the vigorous injunction that follows. Paul speaks figuratively, but he anchors *prophet*, *testimony*, and *commandments* to shared functions and values within the community he addresses (i.e., their religious and social values).⁵³ Saarinen Risto writes, “The author presupposes that the [Pastoral] epistles will be read and circulated in the churches.”⁵⁴ Explicitly, Paul first encourages Titus and affirms that he is near and dear to him socially within the community by expressing great affection (Τίτω γνησίῳ τέκνῳ, 1:4), by reaffirming his sanction (ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτη, 1:5), and later by backing his authority (μηδεὶς σου περιφρονεῖτω, 2:15), for example. But, he also does so implicitly when he *trusts* Titus to interpret figurative language, provide ellipsed material, and respond appropriately to signals of approval and disapproval.

Speakers may use non-literal language for a number of reasons, but the speaker-intended effect is the crucial factor for RT. Relevance theorists contend that hearers may note choices of style and semantics but that they unconsciously evaluate them on the basis of relevance—i.e., cognitive effects for processing cost. Counterintuitively, literal utterances sometimes take *more* processing effort to interpret than metaphorical utterances. Nam Sun Song explains this economic reality as he describes the process for interpreting metonymous utterances as well as the reasons that speakers use them.⁵⁵ Literal

⁵² Clark expands “the presumption of optimal relevance” with two basic claims: “The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee’s effort to process it;” and “The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator’s abilities and preferences.” See *Relevance Theory*, 108.

⁵³ Paul addressed Titus to an individual (1:4), but he greets a plural audience (3:15)—a community. Many critical scholars show angst, bewilderment, and rejection. They think that they perceive inconsistency or the pseudonym’s blunder. An elementary fact about ancient letters, especially in the church, is that these letters were always community documents. The author expected semi-public reading for increased accountability and *ethos*. See Marshall, *Critical and Exegetical*, 347–49; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 459.

⁵⁴ *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*, Brazos Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 23.

⁵⁵ See “Metaphor and Metonymy,” 100–103.

representations can necessarily involve complexity that figures of speech can capture simply. A company with a *number of passenger vehicles for on-road use* may refer to this collection as a *fleet*. The literal meaning barely occurs to users. Such metaphorical language achieves cognitive effects efficiently mainly by saving processing effort, but metaphor and metonymy can also amplify cognitive effects. Consider the example of Donald Trump calling Elizabeth Warren *Pocahontas*. In one word, he conveys a complex of ideas—inappropriate and unauthorized honor claims, for example. The public forum and the relationship between these political figures contributed to the shaming effect of the metonymy. Paul had no previously lexicalized version of what he meant by *prophet*, so it has an ad hoc meaning that he trusted Titus to comprehend. Speakers do this around the clock.

Metaphor may enhance the style and pathetic effect of writing aside from altering the propositional content, but such enhancements are not merely aesthetic. Relevance theorists consider them functional—pragmatic.⁵⁶ Figurative language creates shared knowledge, insider ideas, which have the effect of developing social bonds. Song writes, “Creation of this kind of affective mutuality outweighs the extra processing effort incurred by the use of metonymy.”⁵⁷ The less literal and the more echoic a speaker’s language is, the more the interpretation of those utterances achieves *ethos* with the hearer, trust and rapport.⁵⁸ Titus was an open letter to a community (3:15) and not simply to the individual who was named (1:4). By building bonds with Titus publicly through his use of non-literal language, Paul was endowing Titus with authority and demonstrating his trust and intimacy. Let us now consider related social and behavioral outcomes.

III. The Social and Behavioral Outcomes of Ostensive Inferential Communication

Grice proposed what Relevance theorists now take for granted—that the act of speaking involves the communication of intention. This is distinct from the linguistically-encoded meaning of the words and carries with it the implication that the speaker wants the hearer to think or do something in response to her intention. As Searle explains, “The speaker intends to produce a certain illocutionary effect in the hearer, and he intends to produce

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 95–97.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁸ See Jobes, “Relevance Theory,” 790.

this effect by getting the hearer to recognize his intention to produce it.”⁵⁹ So, Levinson writes, “Communication is a complex kind of intention that is achieved or satisfied just by being recognized.”⁶⁰ This recognition occurs in the hearer. Gibbs notes the currency within linguistics of the idea that “communication exploits the human ability to attribute intentions to each other.”⁶¹ Most theorists assert the centrality of intention, and this intention includes a change of some kind in the hearer. Of course, the hearer may not *act* according to the speaker’s wishes, but expectations of hearer uptake (perlocution) are intrinsic to communication even if speakers cannot control or predict the response. This is a specific claim under the general principle that $context^1 + utterance = context^2$.

The speaker expects the hearer to participate (as *patient* and *agent*) in the creation of $context^2$. I use the term *paraenetic* to label this aspect of language that expects commensurate response from listeners. A *commensurate response*, in Relevance-theoretical terms, means effects involving the hearer that correspond (positively or negatively) with speaker intentions.⁶² It is a step beyond what the speech itself accomplishes, but it is an outcome that the speaker intends from her utterance. In favor of theological and historical interests, I think that the paraenetic nature of language is underappreciated in many examples of biblical interpretation, particularly of the NT epistles. So, let us now consider *The Essential Paraenesis of Natural Language*.

The Essential Paraenesis of Natural Language

Clean your room! conveys, informationally, the proposition, *The speaker is ordering the listener to clean the room that pertains to the listener*, but this is not without remainder. If I speak that sentence to my son, the enriched meaning, informationally, may come out as, *Barney’s father is ordering [and, by implication, desires and expects] Barney to clean Barney’s room*. Notice that only two of the words from the propositional form (*clean* and *room*) are represented explicitly in the original form, and that the verb *clean* (without morphological alteration) changes inflection from second-person imperative to

⁵⁹ “Indirect Speech Acts,” in *Speech Acts*, ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, vol. 3, Syntax and Semantics (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 59–82, at 59.

⁶⁰ *Pragmatics*, 16.

⁶¹ “Intentionalist Controversy,” 182.

⁶² In the development of SAT, many have attempted to delimit a range or to enumerate the kinds of possible acts. For RT, the number could be infinite or minute as long as they correspond to speaker intention. Any introductory work on SAT explains this delimiting issue. See, e.g., Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 226–83.

(complementary) infinitive, removing the conventional *directive* force.⁶³ The sentence does not supply the additional information required to derive this propositional form. One must hear the utterance in context and enrich it by attention to pronomial and social deixis, cognitive environment, and so forth—ideas we have already discussed in detail.

Nevertheless, for one to know this information, as enriched and completely expressive as it may seem, does not *in any degree* fulfill the ostensive purpose of the utterance, which can only be fulfilled by a certain room, pertaining to my son, being cleaned by the person so instructed. If speaker intention is truly central to comprehension, as RT contends, then interpretation is incomplete at the stage of deriving mere propositional meaning. This is not a theological argument; this is the nature of language.

Clearly, not all speech is command, therefore not all *commensurate response* is obedience. Imperative language provides a perspicuous example of the claim that speakers intend hearers to participate in the creation of *context*² as *patients* and *agents*. For other moods, the truth may be less obvious, but speakers expect even the most seemingly innocuous utterance couched in milk-toast declarative grammar to have some real-world effect. Although accounting for the *felicity conditions* of every kind of speech would be an exhaustive prospect for Speech-Act theorists, Relevance Theory does not require them, because ostensive intention (from the speaker's perspective) and inferential recognition (from the hearer's perspective) are sufficient for interpretation. A hearer may comprehend the meaning of an utterance without taking the action the speaker wishes (i.e., a volitional step beyond perlocution).⁶⁴

With command language, he does not need to obey her in order to understand her. But, he will not understand her without attributing the appropriate intentions to her and considering the implications of such. Comprehending requires him to be conversationally cooperative; obeying or disobeying requires an independent volitional response, which may necessarily be subsequent to the satisfactory comprehension of her utterance but which, nevertheless, is conceptually latent in it. Particular hearer responses (involving volition) are not necessary to comprehending meaning as long as the hearer cooperates with the speaker by attributing appropriate intentions and deriving appropriate

⁶³ Briggs provides a nuanced discussion of the relationship between formal features of language (e.g., vocabulary) and illocutionary force. See *Words in Action*, 98–102. In my example, *order* carries the conventional force of a directive, but the proposition includes it on the basis of pragmatic inference. Once it is placed into this declarative form, it no longer has the same effect for the hearer.

⁶⁴ To distinguish an illocution from an involuntary perlocution, consider one's response to *James is cheating on you*.

implicatures. Interpretation that merely results in more elegant or elaborate, simplified or sophisticated theoretical constructs—interpretation that does not recognize that authors are making claims upon readers, expecting them to feel, think, choose, and act—is not true to the nature of communication.

Commentators on Titus recognize its ethical thrust, but they often see this as a factor of Paul’s twofold concern with belief and behavior, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, gift and task, indicative and imperative (or however the particular scholar labels these categories). Mounce, for instance, outlines a development from faith to knowledge to action in his comments on Titus 1:1.⁶⁵ In Paul’s usage, however, the term πίστιν (*faith*, 1:1), may entail just as much moral action as the term εὐσέβειαν (*piety*, 1:1). Barrett differentiates consistently between *doctrine*, which for him more narrowly designates theological tenets, and *behavior*, especially when discussing heresy in the Pastorals.⁶⁶ For some, Paul seems to display a higher proportion of paraenesis in the PE than in the undisputed works. This may be the case if we assume that Paul’s doctrine is based on a dichotomy and relation between theological proposition and ethical consequence. Mounce, however, also notes that “in the [PE], ... right belief and right behavior are inseparable.”⁶⁷ For Mounce, the dichotomy is fused but preserved. One could argue whether this is a mistaken understanding of Paul, but what concerns me is whether this is even an adequate understanding of language. I reassert, language *is* paraenetic. What seems more appropriate to the PE, and Titus in particular, is to understand doctrine as encompassing all that is taught, thus incorporating truth in life, comprising faith and practice. Doctrine (or heresy for that matter) may include propositional content, but it is not merely propositional. I will now develop this claim with reference to a couple of specific non-propositional uses of language in Titus—the relational outcomes of Paul’s speech and what he means by the prominent concept of *sound doctrine*.

Relational Outcomes

Recognizing the non-propositional dimensions of communication illuminates Paul’s intentions within Titus’s community. Song explains some of the relational effects of the use of metaphor.⁶⁸ Some contextual implications, some strengthening of existing

⁶⁵ See *Pastoral Epistles*, 379.

⁶⁶ See *Pastoral Epistles*, *passim*.

⁶⁷ *Pastoral Epistles*, 379.

⁶⁸ Song, “Metaphor and Metonymy,” 94.

assumptions, and other cognitive effects involve camaraderie, trust, a sense of privileged insight, a sense that the speaker is vulnerable and trusting, drawing listeners into an experience of greater intimacy, and so forth. Some of these effects are based on weak implicatures; but they are rhetorically powerful effects that lead, in particular, to increased *ethos*. It is implicitly trusting for a speaker to use ambiguity, because she is relying upon her hearer to make meaning out of her utterance. Take irony, for example. It is a complex use of language, but the payoff can make it economical. Suppose something goes horribly wrong and a speaker says, *Nice*. By *mentioning* a single word, she conveys a number of implications with tremendous cognitive effects for a hearer who is able to interpret properly. The rewards of successful utterance interpretation involve a valuable social connection with the speaker—sympathy, insight, even trust.

Grice famously illustrated the difference between *natural* and *non-natural* meaning in a manner that I adapt here:⁶⁹ Imagine the difference between *showing* Mrs. Smith a photograph of Mr. Smith behaving inappropriately with Ms. Scarlett and *drawing* Mrs. Smith a picture of the same scene. The photograph has a natural meaning such that, even if Mrs. Smith did not grasp your intention in presenting it to her—in fact, even if Mrs. Smith accidentally found it—it would carry the same meaning (namely, *my husband is having an affair*). In the case of drawing the same scene, Mrs. Smith would only ascertain that meaning if she grasped your intention. In the same way, merely knowing that the Cretan quotation circulated among troublemakers within the congregation did not prompt Titus to act. Paul portrayed the situation and implicated his own attitude toward it (1:12–13). Once Titus (and the audience of Titus) grasped this implication, he had a basis for appropriate action, and Paul’s consequential instructions could appear wise, fair, stern, and reasonable, even kind, in that he did not treat them as enemies to be opposed as much as household members to be restored.

Relevance theorists identify the strongest, or most relevant, cognitive effect that an utterance can have to be a contextual implication where new information follows from the combination of new and existing assumptions but would not follow from either alone.⁷⁰ Suppose that the church in Crete, including Titus, was aware that presumptive leaders were disparaging Cretans; they did not know, however, that Paul was aware of this behavior; further, they did not know how disfavorable it was to Paul or whether Paul would be so

⁶⁹ Described in Serban, “Gricean Pragmatics and Text Linguistics,” 97.

⁷⁰ Clark, *Relevance Theory*, 102.

bold as to act on the knowledge in such a way as to significantly affect them (e.g., by way of shame or other social consequence). Imagine the cognitive effect of discovering that Paul *has* heard (as we know he would be able to about issues in distant churches), *did* adamantly disapprove it, and *was* bold enough to address it. This would lead to tremendous cognitive effects, and Paul expressed his hope and expectation that it would also lead to repentance and restoration.

The near literary context suggests that Paul was focusing on issues of leadership malpractice (Titus 1:5–16), and the broad book context suggests that the Cretan church was disturbed by brokers of inappropriate ethno-religious valuation (see, e.g., 1:10–16; 2:7–8, 15; 3:9–11). Therefore, an interpretation will achieve maximal relevance, by understanding that Paul uses the quotation to address religious leadership malpractice involving problematic ethno-religious valuations. If both the narrow and the broad literary conversational contexts do not suggest a persistent concern with laziness, gluttony, and viciousness, then the conclusion that the quotation was Paul’s bald assessment of the Cretans seems an unjustified departure from context. It does not meet the criterion of relevance as efficiently as the conclusion that Paul is speaking *against* ethno-religious valuations and leadership malpractices that are contrary to *healthy doctrine* rather than *as* an evaluator of persons on the basis of ethno-religious affiliations contrary to his gospel to the Gentiles.

It is clear from 2 Cor 10:10 and its surrounding context (10:1–18) that, as a key leader in the church, the Apostle Paul was able to receive news from distant congregations and represent critical portions in reported speech. He included as much detail as was needed to ensure his original hearers were able to identify the nature of the speech and the speakers and to draw inferences that had appropriate effects. Particularly, when reporting the speech of opponents, the cognitive effects that came from recognizing that the speaker was publicly exposing objectionable actions and attitudes would have been impressive. This is just what Paul seems to be doing in Titus, perhaps even using a courtroom type-scene.⁷¹ Now, let us consider what Paul means pragmatically by *sound doctrine*.

⁷¹ Craig S. Wansink points out that in Roman trials that had no precedent established, the manner of obtaining evidence was unrestricted. He writes, “In trials heard *extra ordinem*, the magistrate had no limitations placed on how he came to his knowledge (*cognitio*) of the crime.” See “Roman Law,” 986, at 986.

Ethics and Redemption in the Sound Doctrine of Titus

It is common to characterize ethical discourse in the NT epistles, particularly of Paul, as bipartite—theological warrant and ethical mandate. Thorvald B. Madsen, II sets out to discern whether the structure of ethical argument in the Pastorals follows the same “gift and task” logic or “indicative and imperative” movement that he perceives in the undisputed Paulines.⁷² I take issue with the *ex ante* assumption that this form of ethical reasoning typified the Apostle Paul’s teaching at a macro or micro level. This preconception may tacitly limit the possible structures of any ethical argumentation. Furthermore, Madsen finds “gift and task” (theology-to-ethics) reasoning by pairing explicit ethical injunctions with rationale that Paul formally expressed in various contexts. Such a clear-cut analysis does not appreciate holistic ethical argument or systemic grounds for ethical instructions in the absence of case-by-case explanations. In contrast to this common characterization, Paul displayed more continuity between the attitudes and behaviors he mandated and any logical rationale. He moved seamlessly between ethical expectations, strategic witness (Titus 2:7–8), theological truth (2:11–13), and intrinsic motivation (2:14). He also fluidly refers to both concrete behaviors and theological truths as *doctrine* (διδασκαλία, 1:9; 2:1–10, esp. 1, 7, and 10; cf. parallel statements in 1:13; 2:2). In cases where Paul’s instructions had no explicit underlying principle, it seems adequate to accept that he considered certain behaviors (e.g., *serious*, 2:2; *not slaves to drink*, 2:3; cf. 1:7; *lovers of [their] children*, 2:4; *submissive*, 2:5; cf. 1:6, 10; 2:9) to simply be good doctrine. Paul’s doctrine comprised ethical content, not merely consequence, in the same way that language affects behavior, not by first passing through cerebral processes by which it is consciously ratified in a multi-step process but by affecting listeners at the point of hearing.

Not only is comprehension a rapid “online” process, but cognitive and behavioral responses to ostensive inferential communication are frequently immediate, too. Finding yourself waving in response to someone who was not waving at you demonstrates just how promptly humans are wired to respond immediately upon comprehension, even when mistaken about the communicator’s intentions. Even to a toddler, a parent’s predication,

⁷² Madsen, “Ethics of the Pastoral Epistles,” 219–40. He is heavily indebted to Rudolf Bultmann, “Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus,” *ZNW* 23 (1924): 123–40. The conception of a relationship between Paul’s theology and ethics such that one provides rationale for the other is commonplace. See comments on the PE in Georg Strecker and Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, *Theology of the New Testament (Theologie Des Neuen Testaments, English)*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, trans. M. Eugene Boring (New York: de Gruyter, 2000), 593–94.

“Hot!” while tapping the stove causes a gut-level effect in the child, so that he recoils and customarily avoids touching the thing that his mother indicated would be painful to touch. Conveying the informative proposition “this stove can become hot and painful to touch” falls short of both her communicative intention and his actual reaction. The stove has become hot in the child’s mind as soon as Mommy said it was a *hot* thing. I use an illustration from early language acquisition to show that behavioral outcomes are fundamental to communication. In adult experience, as soon as we are told *that* a loved one has died, we begin grieving and considering the wide-ranging implications, just as the speaker expects. The speed at which speech affects humans suggests that ethical response does not require a multi-step cognitive process. *Next stop is Jackson Heights—Roosevelt Boulevard* has various kinds and degrees of relevance to passengers, but it rarely fails to affect the neurons and the feet, depending on its level of relevance. Ostensive inferential communication affects the world through the human agency of hearers. Love letters *do* something physiological to readers that not only exceeds their informative power but betrays their underlying intention.⁷³ Again, I am not making a theological argument here, but a linguistic one.

Careful, multi-step argumentation in ethical reasoning generally or in the NT epistles specifically is both present and appropriate; but I am emphasizing the power and purpose of utterances to affect behavior and that behavior, in turn, to affect argument. Paul articulates the *is* in close connection to the *ought*, but his communication of the *is* and the *ought* affect response and reinforce one another.⁷⁴ Madsen is right in his judgment that the conventional wisdom regarding the PE—and, as always, by implication, Titus—has led students to read and to believe Titus’s ethical instruction to be “prudential and derivative” in tone, never vital and responsive.⁷⁵ In truth, the term ὑγιαίνω (*I am healthy*, 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2) and cognate ὑγῆς (*healthy*, 2:8) in Titus is shorthand for the total constellation of theological and ethical claims Paul makes, including the positive and negative instructions. But, for those steeped in the conventional thinking regarding the PE, *sound doctrine* = *safe doctrine*. In other words, it does not represent an example of the Apostle Paul responding creatively to live issues in the church using the resources of the Jewish faith as interpreted

⁷³ On the Song of Songs, Klangwisan discusses the lover’s words as provocative speech. See *Earthing the Cosmic Queen*, 10–11.

⁷⁴ I take Madsen’s language a step further by applying linguistic insights that he did not have in view. See “Ethics of the Pastoral Epistles,” 224.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 238.

through the Christ event. In this vein of interpretation, *sound doctrine* = *stale doctrine*. Reading the text with this assumption perpetuates a self-fulfilling prophecy as undergraduates, having been primed by professors, read these texts for the first time and form opinions on the basis of these biases.⁷⁶ Prejudices in place, the dynamism and creativity of Paul's *sound doctrine* is obscured by misplaced suspicion and dubious preconceptions.⁷⁷

One may agree with Madsen that the “core ‘logic’ and content [of Titus] agree with the major epistles” but still disagree with its characterization as bipartite—indicative and imperative.⁷⁸ Paul's ethical logic in Titus does not argue from truth to proper action, since he refers to both under the same heading—*sound doctrine* and its corollaries with *faith* and *word* (1:9, 13; 2:1, 2, 8).

Huizenga claims that Paul “does not describe or engage their [the troublemakers'] ideas in any constructive way.”⁷⁹ On the one hand, it might have been artificial and extraneous for Paul to describe any situation that was already in Titus's situation-contextual knowledge, especially given that elliptical language is more trusting and efficient; on the other hand, I contend that many interpreters for the foregoing reasons have not seen that Paul might have been quite directly addressing one of the particular expressions of the problem in Crete. Furthermore, Paul did so constructively, because the purpose of Paul's instruction ultimately was *in order that they might be healthy in the faith* (ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει, 1:13). Reconciliation was Paul's endgame. A *conviction* (ἔλεγχις; cf. cognates in 1:9, 1:13; 2:15) with such an effect in mind may be called *restorative justice*.

Huizenga, along with others, suggests that the author was being unfairly divisive toward the opponents, not affording them space within the Christian community on account of his bigoted attitudes. The divisive phrase she points to is αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον

⁷⁶ Consider R. Walter L. Moberly's formative story about his pre-ministry university experience (particularly related to critical issues in the PE) in the opening paragraphs of “Biblical Hermeneutics and Ecclesial Responsibility,” in *The Future of Biblical Interpretation: Responsible Plurality in Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Matthew R. Malcolm (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 133–56. Johnson describes the dilemma of short-circuiting critical inquiry in undergraduate institutions by insisting upon adherence to established conventions regarding the PE. See *First and Second Letters*, 55.

⁷⁷ M. Harding, taking Titus to be pseudonymous, nevertheless, sees the author as “not just as a theologian of the Pauline tradition, but as a creative and persuasive *communicator* of the Pauline heritage in his social context;” quoted in Marshall, “Pastoral Epistles,” 286–87.

⁷⁸ Madsen, “Ethics of the Pastoral Epistles,” 238. I do not address all of the particulars upon which I agree or disagree with Madsen. His reading of the Pastorals favors particular theologically conservative objectives.

⁷⁹ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 179.

... παραιτοῦ (*put aside/avoid a divisive person*, 3:10; note the ellipse I have left in the Greek), and she assumes that to label someone *heretical* (αἰρετικός) is inherently divisive.⁸⁰ Interpreters who indict Paul for divisiveness, however, are too dismissive of the intervening qualification of the full statement—αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον μετὰ μίαν καὶ δευτέραν νοουθεσίαν παραιτοῦ (*put aside/avoid a divisive person after a first and a second reminder*, 3:10). But, more importantly, they tend not to relate Paul's rebuke type language in 3:10 with that in 1:13—δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἔλεγγε αὐτοὺς ἀποτόμως, ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει (*for which reason, [I instruct you to] rebuke them vigorously, in order that they might be healthy in the faith*)—which I argue conceives rebuke as a necessary precursor to reconciliation, because no relational progress can occur until the parties own up to the truth. As I explained above, Relevance theorists claim that processing a broader context (as is necessary to connect 1:13 with 3:10) may require more effort, but it allows interpreters to consider appropriate implicatures that would not have been available to them on the basis of a narrower context. The sequence of the connection here between Titus 1:13 and 3:10 makes the size of the context inconsequential; because, as I argue, the nature and purpose of rebuke in 1:13 should illuminate that in 3:10. Anyone reading the letter in its entirety, as the original audience did, would not mistake Paul's mention of a *heretic* as unwarranted divisiveness, because they would see his restorative concerns in both the far and near contexts. I have already argued that the pronoun αὐτούς (*them*, 1:13) refers to the troublemakers and not the subjects of the Cretan quotation. In her defense, the influence of *prima facie* reading assumptions probably prevent Huizenga from connecting Paul's instructions in chapters one and three; because she thinks that, in 1:13, Paul is trying to fix the Cretans rather than correct, restore, or rebuke the troublemakers, as I argue.

Paul contrasts Titus's speech with the presumptive leaders' speech (Σὺ δὲ λάλει, *you however [are to] speak*, 2:1; note the clear *inclusio* completed by Ταῦτα λάλει καὶ παρακάλει, *Speak and encourage these things*, 2:15). As an alternative to their *myths* and *commandments* (1:14), Titus is to pronounce the logic of the Christ-life (i.e., the Christian gospel, 2:11–15). In contrast to a faith that is preoccupied with observing specific ethnic, religious, or cultural traditions or shunning others, the Christian gospel reorients faith and

⁸⁰ The qualification could be translated more strictly *after one and [or] two warning[s]*, but I am trying to capture the sense of the conjunction and the cognate for *mind* within the word νοουθεσίαν. I am interacting with comments by Huizenga. See *ibid.*

proclamation around the person and work of God.⁸¹ The ethically-oriented instructions Paul gives Titus to propound in 2:1–10 constitutes *sound doctrine* as much as the more theologically-oriented gospel summary of 2:11–14. Titus 2 has the highest concentration of *soundness* language in the New Testament (2:1, 2, 8).⁸² The others need rebuke *in order that* (ἵνα) sound doctrine may prevail (1:13).

The subject of the purpose clause ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει (*in order that they might be healthy in the faith*, 1:13c) is not explicit; but, in light of the referential speech throughout the passage, it is most likely the troublemakers. Paul hoped for their restoration. He extended the meaning of ὑγιαίνω (to be in good [physical] health) figuratively to mean good moral, spiritual, and doctrinal health by pairing these ideas in each occurrence (Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2, 8; cf. 1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3). Purpose usages involve movement from one state to another, which suggests not only the sense that the subjects be healthy but that they be health-conducive, an appropriate aspiration for influential people. Paul envisioned a restoration of the presumptive leaders to a right relationship with the church and with God, rather than a simple write-off on account of their wrongdoing.

If one imposes an artificial sequence or dichotomy between belief and behavior, then Titus seems to contain a higher concentration of ethical instruction in comparison to the undisputed Paulines. This imposition requires aligning Greek and Hellenistic Jewish notions of πίστις (*faith, loyalty, trust*) with Anglo-Saxon and Western European notions of belief, but it leads some to read Titus’s highly moralized gospel as un-Pauline. We assume that Paul was against any sort of “works righteousness,” so we are dubious of the clear moral assertions of Titus and the call toward *godly* (εὐσεβῶς, Titus 2:12; cf. cognates in 1:1 and 2:12) behavior. It has been transpiring for over a generation, but interpreters are

⁸¹ Barclay writes that because Paul was “all things to all people” (1 Cor 9:22), “his converts can be faithful to the truth, remaining within, but not beholden to, their various cultural traditions and social positions.” See *Paul and the Gift*, 177.

⁸² The moral nature of sound doctrine also obtains, for example, in 1 Tim 1:10, which contrasts ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία with a behavior-oriented vice list. Such a message is fitting to sound doctrine, because it *is* sound (i.e., *healthy*) doctrine. Although I have deemphasized classic lexicography in favor of lexical pragmatics, standard definitions of ὑγιαίνω have significant social implications. See entries in Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), 1841–42; and Danker et al., *BDAG*, 1023.

learning that morality was always a strong component of Paul's gospel.⁸³ Huizenga hits the nail on the head when she recognizes that

Titus' instruction must match up with what is called 'sound doctrine' (2:1), but the teachings that follow in the rest of the chapter are not really the sort of topics that most modern Christians would consider to be 'doctrine.' The author does not insert any creedal sayings or Scripture verses, such as we read in 1 Tim 2:5–6. Instead, Titus must teach the believers about right actions, especially in fulfilling their household roles and in proper moral behavior.⁸⁴

This non-propositional dimension of communication is not a unique feature of the instruction in Titus and the PE or of the Pauline Corpus. The thrust of the Sermon on the Mount and the entire NT is to affect readers; so *How does the speaker intend to affect hearers?* is not a secondary question to be raised *optionally, after* interpretation. The question is as integral to interpretation as any historical, grammatical, or theological question if we appreciate that change is a function of language.

The gospel summary passages in Titus (2:11–15; 3:3–7) articulate a doctrine of life-change and are not mere rationale for morality. This gospel does not have a moral *and* a theological side; it is a comprehensive argument in which the theology and the ethics of Titus (and Paul's gospel as far as this epistle is concerned) cohere. Paul uses various words for rebuke at various times (1:9; 2:2, 8; 3:9–10), but whatever strays from this life-change gospel logic deserves rebuke. Although Paul and others *can* develop ethical logic from indicative to imperative, they do not *have to*. Direct ethical teaching *as* doctrine does not contradict Paul's gospel, at least in Titus.

Barrett looks for a bipartite ethical logic in the PE; and, coming up short, assumes that Titus fails to integrate ethics and theology transparently. By comparison, he says, the genuine Paul "always makes clear the theological and Christocentric basis of [his] moral demands," whereas the reason for the ethical injunctions of the PE are "far from evident."⁸⁵ He may be right that *reason* and *basis* (Barrett's categories) are not the prerequisite building blocks of ethical instruction in Titus, but the contrast diminishes when one realizes that the *basis* of right behavior is the radical life-change that Paul describes in 2:11–14 and 3:3–7 (cf. Rom 7:21–8:2; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 5:1–23). Reading these

⁸³ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); Michael F. Bird, "When the Dust Finally Settles: Coming to a Post-New Perspective Perspective," *CTR* 2 (2005): 57–69; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*.

⁸⁴ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 146. Note that herein she also rightly admits of a distinction between Titus and another of the PE.

⁸⁵ Barrett, *Pastoral Epistles*, 25, 28.

Pauline passages without superimposing a bipartite ethical logic reveals that Titus is not so different. Paul enjoining *love of aliens* (φιλόξενος, 1:8; cf. φιλοξενία, Rom 12:13) is doctrine, not *based on* doctrine.

Exemplifying the amalgamating tendency of many commentators, Barrett identifies three main reasons for ethical behavior in the PE: the commands of God, the eschatological rewards, and public approval. Only his third—public approval—is arguably of any real significance in the moral logic of Titus.⁸⁶ The prominent language of the *command of God* (1:3; 2:15) in Titus has mostly to do with the matter of calling, not the logic of moral behavior—that is, morality is not simply obedience.⁸⁷ Rather than seeing the cohesive relationship between the gospel’s theological claims and its ethical expectations, Barrett says that Paul “digresses” in 3:3 “to present *the ground* of Christian obedience.”⁸⁸ For Paul in Titus, the basis of good behavior is actual life-change, not a rationalized morality. Paul does not parse its deeper truth into cause and effect.

Commensurate with the nature of intention in communication, interpretations without real-world consequences for the church (and the reader) that harmonize with plausibly discerned authorial intentions should give way to those that have appropriate practical outcomes for the community. Application of Scripture is not an optional step after interpretation reserved for “true believers;” it is the necessary complement to finish the task of interpretation.⁸⁹ Biblical studies can become quite esoteric in its pursuits; but until it reaches for and grasps something close to the speaker’s vision of the world, it has failed to fully interpret. Interpretation does not end with propositions or theological ideas. Comprehending ostensive inferential communication involves considering the social, behavioral, and attitudinal implications of the writer’s utterances, not just the informational. Interpreters must push a step further than dogmatics to pragmatics.

The logic of interpretation does not always shift in sequence from orthodoxy to orthopraxy. Writers communicate throughout Scripture, intending ethical and redemptive results. The Bible is properly interpreted when the Christian life is canonized in behavior.

⁸⁶ Several have argued this point. None better than Hoklotubbe, *Civilized Piety*.

⁸⁷ English readers of the Bible have little access to the correlation between Paul’s *command* (ἐπιταγή, 1:3; 2:15; cf. 1:5) language and the prominent concept of *submission* (ἀνυπότακτος, 1:6, 10; ὑποτάσσω, 2:5, 9; 3:1) in the moral landscape of Titus.

⁸⁸ *Pastoral Epistles*, 133.

⁸⁹ Whereas we often think of *truth* as intellectual, Scripture does not skip a beat in referring to truth in terms of behaviors. For instance, 1 John 1:6; 2 John 4; 3 John 3–4, 8; and elsewhere refers to *doing* the truth, *walking* in the truth, and actions required to become *co-workers* in the truth.

Wall gives extended and careful treatment to the notion of canon, especially for the PE, texts with a deutero-Pauline stamp. One of Wall's points is that the church's performance of the text canonizes a certain behavioral norm, not just in the reading and teaching on the texts in a corporate worship setting, but in the life and community of believers as they enact their interpretations of Scripture.⁹⁰ *How does one consider the ethical outcome of biblical utterances?* Ask what attitudes and behaviors all readers of the text should inhere.

The logic of this gospel is *not* about *good reasons to obey the demands of Christian morality*; it is about a transformation that occurs through the gospel that cannot exist in anything other than a changed life (e.g., it cannot be enshrined in confessional propositions). Therefore, attention to ethno-religious observances, debates, and aspirations (1:10–16; 3:8–11) on top of this gospel are misplaced and problematic. The Cretans have been transformed *as* Cretans, and do not need to be changed *from* Cretans. The Cretan quotation (1:12b) locates moral deficiency in one's heredity, and the solution the troublemakers offered was in surface-level conversion by adherence to particular religious-cultural attitudes and behaviors. The deep, personal and spiritual transformation that Paul eloquently describes in his gospel summaries (2:11–14; 3:3–7) comes about by divine power. This is why the quotation is so repugnant to Paul; it questions the thoroughness of God's power and his gospel of salvation.

⁹⁰ This emphasis aligns with the Two Horizons Commentary series. See *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 24–27.

Conclusions and Implications

It should be clear from this study that the Epistle of Titus preserves two ancient opinions regarding Cretans in the church, not one. Troublemakers in the community described the Cretans as existential reprobates (1:12); whereas Paul described them as “At one time, foolish ... hateful; but now ... reborn, renewed ... heirs by grace” (3:3–7).¹ Countless readers of the Bible have accepted the troublemakers’ opinion of the Cretans as their own under the influence of the *prima facie* interpretation. My thesis was that *prevalent readings of Titus 1:12 and its famous Cretan quotation are unsustainable on linguistic, literary and historical grounds; so I applied key insights from Relevance Theory to incisively evaluate previous interpretations and to discern a historically and linguistically responsible reading, thereby also suggesting the promise of a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic*. I trust that this dissertation has amply demonstrated the merit of my case and the constructive possibilities of a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic.

Each chapter’s Relevance-theoretical insight yielded two kinds of innovation: Not only did I present original critiques of previous interpretations of Titus 1:12, but I also offered fresh Relevance-based solutions to interpretive problems. For instance, in Chapter One—*The Inferential Nature of All Communication*, we saw that speaker attitude is crucial to interpretation and inferred that Paul was distancing himself from the quotation in various ways; in Chapter Two—*The Hearer’s Role in Communication*, we saw how the salience of Paul’s accusation was greater for the original audience than that of bigotry, which strikes modern audiences as more salient; and in Chapter Three—*The Non-Propositional Dimensions of Communication*, we considered how matters of social intimacy and trust, public exposure and pressure, and ethical behavior were integral to Paul’s message. In each chapter, I demonstrated how a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic helps modern readers evaluate previous interpretations, attend to critical linguistic evidence, and appreciate the ancient audience’s cognitive processes.

I have provided many specific examples of the *prima facie* interpretation—a synthetic composite of problematic readings and their accompanying assumptions. No particular scholar holds this reading *in toto*; but, as I described in my *Introduction*, one can identify the *prima facie* reading on the basis of a scale of relative adherence to a cluster of

¹ My dynamic equivalent translation.

five assumptions: 1) Paul’s authorial sympathy with the quotation’s linguistically-encoded contents, 2) contextual discontinuity between the thrust of the quotation and the surrounding material, 3) ancient literary or archaeological corroboration of the veracity of the quotation, 4) conflation of the troublemakers and the general Cretan church populace, and 5) dubious attribution to the Cretan poet Epimenides.

In summary, interpretations that rely on these assumptions, exhibit some of the following contradictions: Paul, the canonical “Apostle to the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13; see also 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11), categorized Gentile Cretans as existentially vicious by virtue of their heredity. Although Paul indicated that *those of the circumcision* (Titus 1:10) constituted the most significant contingent of troublemakers in Crete, he instructed Titus to *rebuke* (1:13) the general Cretan populace. While addressing issues of leadership malpractice, Paul suddenly disparaged Titus’s host population for general moral failure, making it look like his missionary strategy was to alienate and deprecate the native population. I have offered a plausible alternative to this interpretation.

In my view, Paul does not originate or accept the quotation in its substance. He is concerned with what is happening in the church on two levels—the leadership in specific (1:5–16) and the believers in general (2:1–3:11). The moral issues raised in the quotation are not prominent in the rest of the letter. Among the troublemakers, in accordance with their own prejudices, *someone* (τις, 1:12) has ripped this quotation from its native context and co-opted it to disparage Cretans. The presumptive leaders and their sympathizers held the attitude that Cretan converts were culturally, religiously, and thereby morally inferior. This is a plausible reading, given that Paul associates the main contingent of troublemakers in ethno-religious terms. Their doctrine is disgraceful in light of Paul’s gospel of transformation (3:3–7; see also 2:11–14). Hence, he orders a narrowly targeted restorative rebuke (1:13).

I contend that Paul is not instructing Titus to embark on a wholesale campaign of *severe rebuke* (1:13) toward his missionary congregation and their neighbors on account of moral faults as innate and intractable as their ethnicity. The quotation does not even represent the moral topics Paul seems concerned with throughout the letter, with the exception of deception, which would operate paradoxically if a Cretan originated the quotation. This paradoxical feature made it attractive to sustain out of its poetic context. In the mouth of any non-Cretan, the poetry and paradox of the quotation dissolves, and it merely becomes an ugly ethnic slur. Paul exposes it in a stark light.

If my reading is accepted, then Paul is not making an assertion about the Cretans *qua* Cretans in 1:12, but rather his *testimony* (1:13) pertains to the leaders who concern him in 1:10–12. Paul appears to be a bigot on the basis of a *prima facie* interpretation. Various interpreters have attempted to mitigate or excuse his bigotry, and I have demonstrated several of the problems with those attempts. Although it may be unconventional with respect to the history of interpretation, the reading I suggest emerges from a *relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic*.

Now that I have demonstrated a reading strategy that is sensitized to three key insights of Relevance Theory (RT), I will describe what I see as the scholarly contribution it makes and the scholarly context into which it fits. The remainder of this *Conclusion* outlines how this present work engages and contributes in four areas: 1) biblical hermeneutics, 2) secondary literature on Titus and the PE, 3) the modern-day appropriation of the original message of Titus, and 4) possible implications for the canonical esteem of Titus.

I. A “Relevance-Guided Biblical Hermeneutic”

RT is not a method of interpretation, but I have shown that its insights can aid interpretation and can support the critical evaluation of existing interpretations. Throughout this study, I have interacted directly with the work of scholars who have written at this juncture of interests—RT and Biblical Studies. I have articulated three key insights and shown how they can illuminate this problematic passage (i.e., a passage with a contentious history of interpretation) by applying these insights in the critical examination of the biblical text and interpretations thereof. Although I have not outlined a methodology *per se*, I have demonstrated the promise of a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic for ameliorating interpretive impasses. I have grounded the rationale for each aspect of my approach in central insights of RT, which in turn is grounded in the success of human language. This project provides a valuable example for the critique and foundation for the development of a properly transparent and repeatable methodology.

II. A Critical Contribution to Titus and Pastoral Epistles Scholarship

Although other scholars have already placed RT on the workbench for biblical interpretation, mine is one of the only concentrated studies of Titus or the Pastorals using a relevance-guided hermeneutic. I have suggested a fresh approach for biblical

interpretation, guided by core insights of RT, and it has yielded promising new results that make a valuable critical contribution to scholarship on Titus and the PE.

On the basis of this approach, I have shared several original critical judgments. I have explained several reasons that conventional interpretations of Titus 1:12 are unsustainable. I have argued that interpretations that depend on attributing the Cretan quotation to a certain ancient personality in Crete, although commonplace, are misguided and misleading. The quotation may have incorporated a popular saying, and hearers may have thought that a Cretan originated some or all of it, but I have shown that Paul seems to have other specific concerns with it.

Following Thiselton, I have critiqued the practice of gathering incriminating evidence against Cretan people in concert with the tenor of the quotation.² Such efforts to justify or explain Paul's assumed sympathy with this quotation on the basis of contrived historical evidence that Cretan people were somehow more vicious than their contemporaries smacks of the bigotry that interpreters are unreflectively pinning on Paul.

This proposal addresses aspects of the historical, literary, and grammatical issues in Titus that have not customarily been dealt with in other treatments. It does not exclude the fine proposals that have been made regarding the logical devices Paul may have employed, but it does judge certain readings unacceptable.

The question of whether one takes either the pseudonymity or the authenticity of the Pastorals as a starting point has become a tacit litmus test for interpretational validity—a problematic assumption that a relevance-guided biblical hermeneutic may ameliorate. This *shibboleth* does not prove to be an obstacle for my proposal. My thesis stands whether Titus is pseudonymous or authentic. We can discern from the encoded content and our knowledge of the world and language—quite apart from any conviction about the historical identity or circumstances of “Paul” and “Titus”—that Paul was giving an example of bad behavior that has come to his attention and needs to be rebuked by his local representative.

III. Modern-Day Appropriation of the Message of Titus

In line with the non-propositional dimensions inherent to communication, I have suggested that Paul advances a conviction to not accept bigotry in the church but to address it sternly. For the sake of integrity to my own argument, I must say that my interpretation would be

² Thiselton, “Logical Role.”

incomplete without a practical conclusion. The results of the hermeneutical process I am formulating and demonstrating shows a coherent message in Titus. It is a moral teaching for the church, exposing the evil and the harm of holding and spreading prejudices, especially amongst leaders in the church. The canonical Paul (if also the historical Paul) thinks that bigotry and heredity- and religion-based classism is a blemish to the Christian faith that deserves severe rebuke. Furthermore, a pastor should not ignore such a fault but should lead the way in correcting it. That the wording of the slur may have originated from a person of the disparaged ethnicity is not an excuse for perpetuating it—*à la, I can tell this Cretan joke; I heard it from a Cretan; even they admit it to be true.*³ This interpretation is not a lesson we typically hear from Titus, yet I am convinced that it was crucial to the situation in which it was written.

Paul's use of this quotation exposed an ugly truth about some leading individuals in the Cretan church community—namely, that their religio-cultural posturing and sense of superiority had gone as far as veiled and self-justified bigotry against Titus's missionary congregation. Deprecating the population one is assigned to reach with the gospel could not be tolerated, but Paul's goal with the perpetrators was restoration, not mere punishment. The intention of Paul *testifying* (μαρτυρία, 1:13a) and Titus *convicting* (ἐλέγχω, 1:13b) was that the troublemakers (if also the entire church) would be *healthy* and *health-conducive* (ὕγιαίνω, 1:13c) with respect to the Christian life.

Historically responsible hermeneutical processes do not guarantee politically correct or publicly palatable results. This thesis does not address what many interpreters see as Paul's regrettable one-sidedness or, more pointedly, anti-Semitism or misogyny.⁴ I acknowledge that my proposal has done nothing to alleviate the burden of this picture of Paul. I can only suggest that Paul's condemnation of Jewish religious culture being leveraged to degrade Gentiles is not in itself anti-Semitic. In fact, I would contend that it was in respect to his Jewish heritage and to defend the integrity of his faith and honor the truth of the God of Israel—as well as the *Israel of God* (Gal 6:16)—that Paul planted his foot concerning these rogues (Titus 1:10).

³ As Guthrie explains, "Because a well-known Cretan condemns his own people the apostle cannot be charged with censoriousness for his exposures." See Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 14:200.

⁴ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 139–41; *Regret and onesided* are words used by Marshall, "Pastoral Epistles," 273, 280–81 to cite A. Weiser's 2003 assessment from his contribution to the *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommenar* on 2 Tim. Marshall also highlights the *misogyny* seen in the Pastorals by R. Saarinen.

Furthermore, I add to the argument that, inasmuch as accommodation to social conventions played a role in the moral logic of Titus, Paul's advance of a lifestyle *apologia* equally justifies a present day reexamination. To be specific, whereas accommodating the gospel in a *complementarian* sense to patriarchal and *kyriarchal* customs in the ancient world may have been a strategy that Paul saw as serving the needs of the church, he has set a precedent for affirming an *egalitarian* social structure in the present day, as either social convention may cohere with Titus's transformative gospel and radically submissive social ethic.⁵

Given the legacy that some of our interpretive assumptions regarding this passage have left for Cretans through the centuries, I think we owe someone an apology. *How have our assumptions affected both Cretans and generations of Christians who have unquestioningly accepted that ethno-religious prejudice is harmonious with biblical faith?* For the community of faith, a reading of Scripture that does not lead to loving God and loving neighbor better is not a *good* reading.⁶

IV. Implications for Canonical Esteem

Titus and the Pastorals are under a cloud of suspicion for being misogynistic, racist, anti-Semitic, artless, and incoherent. In light of this, pseudonymity may be the most complimentary attribute some scholars have ascribed to these books. At least the Apostle Paul is off-the-hook! *Right?* As canonical literature, however, such evaluations have grave implications for their confident use in liturgy and proclamation, doctrine and discipleship. In this section of my *Conclusion*, I draw heavily upon the articulations of two scholars to frame this problem—Annette Huizenga, who contends that they are pseudonymous, and Luke Timothy Johnson, who argues their authenticity. It will become evident that they

⁵ Among interpreters who see misogyny, see, e.g., Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 133–84. This is a commentary written entirely from the premise of critiquing androcentric and *kyriarchal* ideologies. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to mount a full argument, it would be a glaring omission to ignore the accusations of anti-Semitism and misogyny, especially given my more narrow concern with ethno-religious bigotry. *Kyriarchy* is described in Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Studies in Religion," 128–29, *et passim*, but initially introduced in her *But She Said*. My brief argument here for a reexamination of the precise form of cultural accommodation complements Marshall's summary of R. Saarinen found in Marshall, "Pastoral Epistles," 280–81. He writes, "Saarinen is not uncritical of what he sees as the Pastor's misogyny and argues that following literally his tendency to accommodate church practice to contemporary social standards may achieve today the opposite effect from what was intended."

⁶ Briggs introduces this very simple, yet profound (from the perspective of interpretive ethics), qualification from Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*. Briggs explores the complexities and subtleties of such a reading ethic. See *Virtuous Reader*, 135–66. He also provides this quotation from Augustine: "So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbor, has not yet succeeded in understanding them" (*Doctr. chr.* 1.41), 141.

both recognize similar implications. Afterward, I will explain how my thesis modestly addresses what I regard as an issue of *esteem*.

Huizenga expresses quite frankly the tension that exists for people who assume the *prima facie* interpretation of Titus 1:12. “We could just possibly ignore the author’s racist and anti-Semitic statements as a random fragment of a long-ago culture, except that it has ended up in our own scriptures under the name of the famous apostle.”⁷ She is correct that something is wrong with this negative attitude toward Cretans and, of course, she is right to object to anti-Semitism. The only problem is that she and many other “advocacy” interpreters have predisposed themselves against the text in a posture of suspicion that will not countenance a sympathetic reading of Scripture.⁸ I contend that the anti-Semitism is superimposed by the interpretation and not intrinsic to the mention of things Jewish, which reflects the author’s concern for true faithfulness (see, e.g., πίστις and cognates in 1:1, 4, 6, 13, 15; 2:2, 10; 3:8², 15) as opposed to merely obsequious socio-cultural performance.

Regarding the place of the Pastorals in the Christian scriptural canon, Johnson writes, “They are not technically outside the canon, but they may as well be for all the attention they receive.”⁹ The suspicion has led to their neglect. Along these lines, Huizenga writes,

In liturgical traditions, worshipers do not often hear readings from the Pastorals at the services. Only short and divided passages have been selected, and these appear just eleven times in the Roman Catholic Lectionary, with nine of these also adopted for the Revised Common Lectionary. The chances that a sermon might be preached on one of these texts must be slim, and when it does occur, the wise preacher ought to be reluctant to tackle the subject of how a pseudonymous author came to be included in the NT canon.¹⁰

As stated in my *Introduction*, Paul’s apparent ethnic bigotry is one of the key reasons that Titus is not accepted as authentically Pauline, but I think that I have shown that Paul appears to be such a bigot largely because of the history of interpretation, not because of the message of the letter. Johnson also recognized the problem with stale, uncritical, predetermined interpretations and lamented the state of research on the Pastorals as he wrote:

⁷ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, 141.

⁸ For an understanding of “advocacy readings,” see Briggs, *Virtuous Reader*, 37.

⁹ Johnson, *First and Second Letters*, 57.

¹⁰ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, xlvi.

What makes the present state of scholarship on the Pastorals so disheartening is that the difficulties (which are of a fundamental character) are seldom even acknowledged, and even less frequently engaged. As a result, the conventional wisdom concerning authenticity moves farther and farther from any grounding in evidence and argument, farther and farther from the best and most recent scholarship on Paul himself, and perpetuates itself mainly by force of inertia based on an unexamined majority vote by an increasingly uninformed electorate.¹¹

Johnson is not alone in his concern for what could be called the *canonical esteem* of the Pastorals. In Huizenga's words, "The suspicion of a pseudonym allows these letters to be diminished in influence since they have lost their apostolic stamp of approval. In fact, some scholars who argue for Pauline authorship are especially concerned that the Pastorals do not become devalued as Christian texts."¹² Donald Guthrie shares this concern: "Over a considerable period serious doubts have been cast upon their authenticity by many scholars and this has tended to decrease their authority."¹³ Consequently, Huizenga describes common approaches to the Pastorals:

A straightforward and widespread approach to the Pastorals is to minimize their presence in the New Testament canon. One may simply avoid reading them or just select a few trouble-free verses for devotional or liturgical purposes, as the lectionary committees have done. One could deny the religious authority vested in these letters or set aside the Pastorals' teachings with a statement like 'that was then, this is now.'¹⁴

Each of these approaches is manifest wherever the Bible has some level of currency (e.g., churches, seminaries, Christian homes). In a modest way, I believe that my thesis may amend some of the suspicion and reclaim a measure of Titus's canonical esteem.

If the Paul of Titus was addressing problems of an ethno-religious nature in which subtle conflicts between Jewish and Gentile Christians prevailed, then the concerns of Titus have more in common with the undisputed letters of Paul than is typically acknowledged. Many scholars do not, however, allow these books to illuminate one another without unmeasured qualification.

Against claims that Titus lacks rhetorical crafting and theological depth, my thesis shows a good deal of Titus's coherence and insight. Rather than an awkward tangent, the quotation was a crucial piece of evidence in Paul's argument against the troublemakers. It

¹¹ Johnson, *First and Second Letters*, 90. Of course, this was published in the early 2000s, but I have not seen a major sea change in the areas of his primary concern since then.

¹² Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, xlvi.

¹³ Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 14:9.

¹⁴ Huizenga, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, lii.

represents a substantial instance of leadership malpractice, a major concern of Paul within Titus. The message of the letter coheres with other NT books and the canonical portrayal of Paul's missionary practice (e.g., *to all people*, 1 Cor 9:19–23; *apostle to the Gentiles*, Rom 11:13; see also Gal 2:2, 8; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). If my account is correct, then the “Paul” of Titus, by disassociating from the negative thrust of the saying and explicitly calling for the chastisement of those who advanced the insult, appears more consistent with the Apostle of the magisterial letters. Ethno-religious divisions evident in Titus parallel those of the undisputed Pauline epistles, suggesting that they could have come from a similar era.¹⁵ The contention that they were fictionalized on the basis of earlier records does not have compelling support.

On the basis of my research, I argue that the writer of Titus is not *participating* in bigotry. Rather, as we would expect from the Apostle, he is *addressing* bigotry as it extends from ethno-religious elitism in the church. He exposes the problem; and he corrects the distortions that had justified the troublemakers' bigotry—distortions of religious value systems (e.g., *clean* versus *unclean* 1:15; *detestable* 1:16), of what constitutes capacity for *good works* (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14), and of what is entailed in *healthy teaching* (1:9, 13; 2:1, 2, 8). He ultimately calls for a restorative rebuke (1:13). However, upon returning to the topic of the troublemakers later in the letter (3:9–11), he admits that sadly not every *divisive person* (3:10) will accept restoration.

¹⁵ A proposal suggested by Johnson's analysis of the historical background. See *First and Second Letters*, 55–90.

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