

»Ready for Every Good Work« (Titus 3:1)

Edited by
RUBEN ZIMMERMANN and
DOGARA ISHAYA MANOMI

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*
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“Ready for Every Good Work” (Titus 3:1)

Implicit Ethics in the Letter to Titus

Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik/
Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics

Volume XIII

edited by

Ruben Zimmermann and
Dogara Ishaya Manomi

Mohr Siebeck

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Foreword

The citation “... ready for every good work” (Titus 3:1) chosen as the title of this book serves as an example for six passages in which “good works” are explicitly mentioned in the brief letter to Titus (Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14). The addressees are not only encouraged in many ways to behave properly. At the same time, the appeals to a good way of life are reflected and justified by arguments. Thus, this letter is about ethics in the narrower sense.

These ethics in the letter to Titus were the subject of an international conference “Ethics in Titus. Exploring an Individual Text Approach to the Pastoral Epistles,” held at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany, from September 12–14, 2019. This volume presents most of the papers from this conference.

This conference represents the culmination of an inspiring time of cooperation between the two editors, which began when Dogara I. Manomi contacted Ruben Zimmermann with the request to write a doctoral dissertation on ethics in Titus within the frame of the Mainz Center for “Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity” (www.ethikmainz.de). Thanks to a fellowship from the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), it was possible for Dogara I. Manomi (and his family) to come to Mainz for three years to work on his dissertation and join the various activities of the faculty.

The concept of this conference is closely linked to the program of the Mainz research center for “Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity (*e/ac*),” founded in 2010 by Friedrich W. Horn, Ulrich Volp, and Ruben Zimmermann. In recent years we have organized several conferences on methodology, norms and forms, and hermeneutics on Ancient Ethics, with special focus on Biblical Ethics with a view towards current ethical debates. We have supervised a number of doctoral students and initiated the sub-series “Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics” in WUNT I/II, in which this volume is published, and the open access “Journal for Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity” (www.jeac.de), whose first issue was published in 2019. It has become clear that approaching early Christian ethics is only possible from different perspectives, engaging with various methods and disciplines and driven by multiple requests from current ethical debates. One of the strengths of the conference – as well as of this corresponding volume – was that it managed to bring together scholars from different geographical, cultural, theological, and confessional backgrounds to stimulate dialogue across boundaries in many ways. This can be considered one of the precious moments in scholarship, because far too often scholarly exchange is limited to researchers

from the same field, who use similar methods and who share similar confessional creeds. We would therefore like to thank first and foremost all participants for engaging in this open dialogue and respectful exchange. We hope that the readers of this volume will also take up this spirit of diversity in their approach to the ethics of the Epistle to Titus and continue to consider it in their own way.

Furthermore, we would like to give our gratitude to the colleagues currently working in the *e/αc*-research center: Dorothea Erbele-Küster, Esther Kobel, Raphaela Meyer zu Hörste-Bührer, Michael Roth, and Ulrich Volp.

We also thank the *Fritz Thyssen-Foundation* for awarding us funds to organize the conference and to help prepare this book. Organizing the conference and preparing the publication requires also help from many people: Thus, we are deeply grateful to Beate Bechthold, Anna Grundhöfer, Charlotte Hausmann, Lara Hauzel, as well as Dr. Alexander Müller and Jacob Cerone.

We give our gratitude also to Professor Jörg Frey and the editorial board for accepting this volume in the WUNT I series. Ms. Elena Müller from Mohr Siebeck gave us professional support in all stages of the publication process, for which we also would like to express our sincere thanks.

Mainz, Germany/Jos, Nigeria,
in August 2021

Ruben Zimmermann
and Dogara I. Manomi

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Introduction

The “Implicit Ethics” in Titus

Introductory Remarks and Summary of the Contributions

Ruben Zimmermann and Dogara Ishaya Manomi

The letter to Titus is one of the briefest writings of the New Testament.¹ It has often been classified among the Pastoral Epistles and there it remains in the shadow of 1 and 2 Timothy. One seldom gives this writing attention in its own right. With this volume, however, we want to deal not only with Titus as an individual letter, but even more, focus on one aspect in particular: the ethics of this writing.

No one will deny that the letter to Titus is about ethics and morality. “Good deeds” are mentioned six times (Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14), virtue and vice catalogues describe the good and bad way of living (e. g., Titus 1:6–9; 2:5), and a household code addresses the different groups in the community (Titus 2:2–9). The moral of the letter, however, has been deemed highly problematic, because of issues pertaining to gender and the social position of women and slaves, the hierarchy of the leadership in the congregation, and the believer’s attitude with respect to society and government. Additionally, at least in German scholarship, presuppositions rooted in Lutheran exegesis on Paul influenced scholarship on Titus. It is striking how consistently, for instance, the commentary by Gottfried Holtz² – an authoritative commentary in Germany for a long time – ignores terms like *καλὰ ἔργα* (Titus 2:7, 14 etc.) or theologically undermines them with the overarching topic of justification.

Thus, the ethics of the letter has been ignored, neglected, or heavily criticized. Furthermore, we realize that an ethical reading of the letter is closely linked with preliminary decisions and preconcepts, with norms and values that a reader brings from a particular context or epistemic interest. How then can we approach the “morality” or “ethics” in the letter to Titus? Do we find in Titus an expression of “ethics” as a reflection on moral behavior at all, or is it all about “ethos”? What does the term “ethics” mean? What are we looking for when analyzing the letter

¹ It consists of only 46 verses and 659 words. Within the Corpus Paulinum only the Letter to Philemon (334 words, 25 verses) is shorter; in the New Testament only 2 John and 3 John are shorter than Titus.

² Gottfried Holtz, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, THKNT 13 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1980; 1st ed. 1966).

with respect to its ethics? What would the relevance of an ethics of Titus be for current ethical debates and Christian churches today?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to locate this volume within a wider frame of research on ethics in the Bible and ancient texts, which has been done at the Mainz “Research Center for Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity” (*e/ac*).³ The goal of this research center is to explore and analyze ethics in ancient texts, with special focus on the time of Early Christianity with a view towards current debates and relevance. The methodological approaches and working definition given in the following section can be seen as the results of this fruitful collaboration at the Mainz Ethics Center. While sharing those insights, we by no means wish to set up a normative terminology or method to function as the hermeneutical key for all the following papers. However, the suggestions of terms and methodological aspects provided a point of entry into the thicket that is the ethical and moral aspects of the letter to Titus. From there, each contributor could find his or her own way by following some lines or by modifying and contradicting others.

1. Working Definition of Ethics

A general consensus has developed in moral philosophy and theology, as well as in biblical scholarship on ethics, that one can categorically distinguish between *ethos* (synonymous with morals) and *ethics*.⁴ “Ethos” can be described as the moral positions of a group based on custom and traditions. “Ethics” is defined as the systematic and theoretical examination of human conduct with a view towards the conditions, rationality, and coherence of moral reasoning and judgement. The *definition* set forth in the *Logic of Love* is as follows: “ethics is the reflective consideration of a way of living with a view towards its guiding norms and having as its goal an evaluation.”⁵

This definition includes three aspects: (1) Ethics has to do with a *meta-perspective on behavior and life*, with the development of and justification for behavioral norms and conduct of living and not simply the formulation of imperatives. (2) The justification is affected through *systematic reflection and language* so that one is not simply dealing with a listing of assumptions or norms, but rather with a morally significant argument (or narrative or metaphor) with the purpose of justifying and defending one’s position or convincing others of its correctness. (3) Ethics entails an *evaluation*, that is to say, ethics always involves

³ See www.ethikmainz.de (19.07.2021).

⁴ See the brief summary on this in Ruben Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love. Discovering Paul’s “Implicit Ethics” through 1 Corinthians*, trans. Dieter T. Roth (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018), 1–2.

⁵ Zimmermann, *Logic of Love*, 4.

a judgment of whether a particular action is to be considered good or bad, or better or worse.

One could immediately object that such an ethics, in the sense of a reflection upon behavior, is nowhere to be found in the Bible. The authors of the Bible differ from moral philosophers. The biblical texts are stories, hymns, or letters – forms that are different from Aristotle’s volumes on ethics. Though this observation is correct, there are good arguments to retain the term “ethics.” Though the letters of Paul, for instance, refer to a certain extent to problems in daily life, the author reflects upon values, puts them in a hierarchical order, and utilizes diverse linguistic forms like arguments, metaphors, or rhetorical questions. We can find ethical judgement and coherency regarding values and norms. In other words, there exists at least some kind of ethical system or underlying ethical theory. The author is not simply a situational moralist who tells his addressees how they should act. For this reason, instead of referring to an “ethos” of an author or audience behind the text, we retain the term “ethics.” At the same time, we would contend that it is more appropriate to speak of an “*implicit ethics*.” The term “implicit ethics” seeks, on the one hand, to do justice to the literary and fragmentary medium that is our biblical texts. On the other hand, despite this reality, it asserts that a coherent, theoretically amenable, and therefore discursively compatible ethics in biblical texts can be recognized.⁶

2. The Organon of the “Implicit Ethics” in Biblical Texts

The *description of the implicit ethics* of a biblical text requires an analysis on several levels, which we refer to as the *organon*⁷ of implicit ethics. This organon is a comprehensive grid, which covers eight different approaches within an ethical reading of New Testament texts. The perspectives are heuristically distinguished, but should not be misunderstood as strictly separated or as a fixed methodological path to be followed in a linear order. We have explored the various perspectives elsewhere in detail.⁸ In the following, we want to present the different aspects briefly and apply them to the letter to Titus by mentioning some

⁶ On the term “implicit ethics,” see Zimmermann, *Logic of Love*, 7–9.

⁷ The allusion to Aristotle’s so-called “organon” once more points out that a tool of analysis can be put together *ex post*, as only ancient commentators grouped together several of Aristotle’s writings on logic (Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics, etc.) under the heading of *Organon* (“Instrument”). See Robin Smith, “Aristotle’s Logic,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-logic/> (30.07.2016).

⁸ See Zimmermann, *Logic of Love*, chapter 2 (theory) and the application in chapter 3. Manomi used selected elements of the organon and applied them in a modified way to Titus in his dissertation. See Dogara Ishaya Manomi, *Virtue Ethics in the Letter to Titus: An Interdisciplinary Study*, Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics XII, WUNT II/560 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021). See also the discussion of the model in *Key Approaches to Biblical Ethics*:

examples from the text. The contributions in this volume deepen some of those issues and can therefore easily be placed in this grid. Some of the contributions referred to the organon explicitly, others chose their own terminology but are still close to our perspectives.

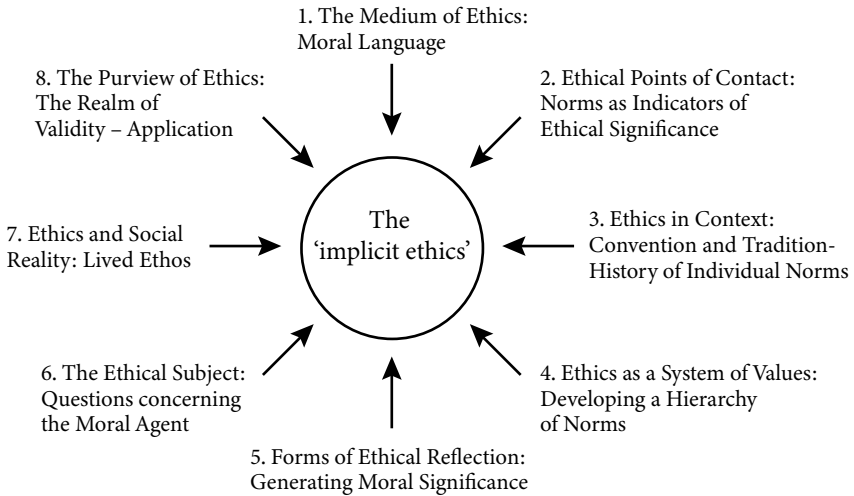


Fig. 1: The “organon” of the “implicit ethics” (analytical grid)

2.1 *The Medium of Ethics: Moral Language.*

Ethical reflection is bound to language and in our case to text. In conjunction with earlier scholarship in moral philosophy (R.M. Hare), we think that there is ethical meaning in specific forms of speaking and writing, and that the moral significance of a text does not just appear *ex post* through the usage of texts in a moralized way. Nevertheless, texts are also part of communication, therefore the moral message sent by an act of speaking must also be part of the analysis. In the complex interrelatedness between “ethics and language,” we can distinguish three overlapping aspects:⁹ (a) at an *intratextual level* we investigate the linguistic form of a text and its moral implications. Ethics can already be found in some words or more precisely semantemes according to their semantic domains. Additionally, word types such as adverbs, verbs, or even prepositions

An Interdisciplinary Dialogue, ed. Volker Rabens, Jaqueline N. Grey and Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn, BINS 189 (Leiden: Brill 2021), 15–79.

⁹ See for details Ruben Zimmermann, “Ethics in the New Testament and Language: Basic Explorations and Eph 5:21–33 as Test Case,” in *Moral Language in the New Testament*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Jan van der Watt, WUNT II/296 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010), 19–50.

each have a different function as carriers of ethical significance.¹⁰ For example, it makes a difference that the noun *σωφροσύνη*, which was used several times in 1 Timothy (1 Tim 2:9, 15), does not occur in Titus, which prefers verbal expressions.¹¹ Furthermore, we ask about literary style and devices: Is this text a metaphor, narration, or discourse? Each of these create ethical meaning in a different way. Ethics is also closely linked with ought-to sentences, ethical instructions,¹² or simply imperatives (e.g., Titus 3:14: *μανθανέτωσαν*). The imperative alone does not yet qualify as ethics according to the definition above. But most of the imperatives are contextually embedded in an argument.

(b) Referring to the *intertextual level* we realize that moral texts of the Bible are part of an intertextual system of ancient literature.¹³ A genre is a typified form of text which is established in a communication culture. Some genres, such as vice catalogues and collections of commands, play an important role in communicating ethical values.

Titus 2:1–10, for example, is correctly classified as a *Haustafel* or household code, along with other New Testament texts (e.g., Col 3:18–4:1; Eph 5:21–6:9; 1 Pet 2:18–3:7) and other ethical texts in the Greek tradition (*oikonomikos* literature). The antithetical rhetoric in Titus also links the letter with the protreptic literature.¹⁴

(c) Finally, as Austin and Searle have pointed out, we do things with words.¹⁵ Speech act theory is particularly helpful for describing the “hidden imperatives” in acts of communication, which leads us to the *extra-textual level*. Ought-to claims are not limited to imperative sentences, but the so-called indirect speech act, the illocutionary act, can also transport an ethical dimension of a statement. “Directives,” speech acts that are intended to cause the hearer to take a particular action (e.g., Titus 1:5: *διατάσσω*; Titus 2:5, 9; 3:1: *υποτάσσω*), and “commissives,” speech acts that commit a speaker to some future action, are particularly relevant to the ethical dimension of a text communication. Brannan puts the two

¹⁰ See on this aspect Dogara Ishaya Manomi, “The Language of Virtue: Discovering Implicit Virtue-Ethical Linguistic Elements in Titus” (in this volume).

¹¹ The noun *σωφροσύνη* occurs in 1 Tim 2:9, 15; in Titus we only find the adjective (*σώφρων*, Titus 2:2, 5) and the adverb (*σωφρόνως*, Titus 2:12) next to the verbs *σωφρονίζω* (Titus 2:4) and *σωφρονέω* (Titus 2:6).

¹² See the contribution by Rick Brannan, “The Language of Ethical Instruction in the Letter to Titus: A View Informed by Discourse Grammar and Speech Act Theory” (in this volume).

¹³ See Jermo Van Nes, “Moral Language and Ethical Argument in Titus: A Reassessment of the Pseudonymity Hypothesis” (in this volume).

¹⁴ See Annette Bourland Huizenga, “Moral Education in Titus: Antitheses for Ethical Living” (in this volume).

¹⁵ See John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). For details about ethical speech acts, see Zimmermann, *Logic of Love*, 37–39.

together under the heading of “obligative speech acts” and considers directive speech acts to be dominant in the letter to Titus.¹⁶

2.2 Ethical Points of Contact: Norms as Indicators of Ethical Significance

Norms form the backbone of each ethical statement. Broadly defined, “norms” in an ethical sentence or discourse express or claim what individuals or groups ought to do. Within a text such an ought-to claim can be set forth in various ways. We find norms that are condensed in a single term, such as “godliness”¹⁷ (εὐσεβεία in Titus 1:1; see also εὐσεβῶς in Titus 2:12), “gentleness” (πραΰτης in Titus 3:2), or “truth”¹⁸ (ἀλήθεια in Titus 1:1, 14), which transport a positive value. In contrast, we also find negative norms, for instance in Titus 1:7, where the leader (“bishop”) should by no means be “self-willed” (αὐθάδης), “wrathful” (ὀργίλος), or “pugnacious” (πλήκτης).

Furthermore, an authority like “Paul himself” (in Titus 1:1 as the fictive author; in Titus 1:5 as someone who directs Titus) or an aim “for the salvation of all men” (Titus 2:11) may be identified as a norm, provided it serves as an element which advocates right behavior. One can argue for a fine distinction between different terms (principle, maxim, goods, values) under the heading of a “norm,” which cannot be explained here comprehensively.¹⁹ Following the analysis by Dogara I. Manomi, more than 100 different norms can be identified in the letter to Titus.²⁰

2.3 Ethics in Context: Convention and Tradition History of Individual Norms

Norms are always embedded in conventional use and meaning. In other words, norms have a certain tradition. In which traditional and contemporary contexts do these norms exist?

Roughly speaking, we can distinguish three areas forming the background of norms in New Testament texts and in Titus in particular: The text refers to *Jewish norms*, like “love” (Titus 2:2), *Jewish myths* (Titus 1:14), or *Jewish rituals* like circumcision (Titus 1:10). There is also a certain degree of knowledge about

¹⁶ See the contribution by Rick Brannan, “The Language of Ethical Instruction in the Letter to Titus: A View Informed by Discourse Grammar and Speech Act Theory” (in this volume).

¹⁷ On the specific use of εὐσεβεία in Titus in relation to “good works,” see the contribution by Philip H. Towner, “The Ethical Agenda of Titus: The Time and Space of Ethics” (in this volume).

¹⁸ On this norm as a guiding principle, see the contribution by Jens Herzer, “Ethics, Ethos, and Truth: Reassessing the Question of the Individuality of the Pastoral Epistles” (in this volume).

¹⁹ See Zimmermann, *Logic of Love*, 43–48.

²⁰ See Manomi, *Virtue Ethics in the Letter to Titus*, 123–125.

fighting over the Torah (see μάχας νομικάς, Titus 3:9), but in general Jewish Scripture does not play a role in the argument.²¹

There are *Hellenistic-philosophical norms*, like “philanthropy” (φιλανθρωπία, Titus 3:4), “hospitality” (φιλοξενία, Titus 1:8), “peace” (εἰρήνη, Titus 1:4) or self-control (σώφρων κτλ., see Titus 1:8; 2:2, 4, 5, 6, 12),²² which have played a central role in Greek moral philosophy. Although Titus might use these norms in a unique way, it is necessary to know about the customary use of these norms in contemporary discourse. Here, too, one can think of individual norms.

Another Greek norm to mention is the proverb that the Cretans are always liars (Titus 1:12), which is quite prominent in philosophy as the so-called “Epimenides paradox.”²³ The introduction of the quote indicates that the author of Titus is fully aware that this was originally told by a Cretan himself (εἶπέν τις ἐξ αὐτῶν ἴδιος αὐτῶν προφήτης). However, the term “prophet,” the context, and the extensions (“The Cretans are vicious brutes, lazy gluttons”) make it seem rather unlikely that the author was aware of the paradox problem, that the statement itself would have to be a lie. It can be seen here, too, that the reference to the norm alone does not permit an ethical judgment; rather, the way in which the norm is used must be analyzed more precisely.

Thirdly, there are specific *early Christian norms*, that is norms which received an unexpected degree of relevance in the early Christian community. In addition to “Jesus Christ” (Titus 1:1, 4; 2:13; 3:6), “faith” (Titus 1:1), and “elect” (Titus 1:1), we find “grace” (χάρις, Titus 1:4; 2:11; 3:7, 15) or “eternal life” (ζωὴ αἰώνιος, Titus 1:2; 3:7). Furthermore, Christian rituals like baptism are mentioned (Titus 3:5: washing of rebirth – λουτρὸν παλιγγενεσίας).

2.4 Ethics as a System of Values: Developing a Hierarchy of Norms

To evaluate the specific use of a norm in the letter to Titus, it is also vital to recognize its concrete position in the text. Which inner context of different norms is produced? Which emphasis of norms, which hierarchy of values can be recognized? Various norms are not presented in a disconnected manner or as equivalent but are correlated. In connection with a moral-philosophical discussion, it might be helpful to differentiate between a “classificatory” and a “com-

²¹ There is no direct quote from the LXX (or Hebrew Bible); in Titus 1:16 there might be an allusion to Psalm 13:1 (LXX), but this remains vague.

²² On the different forms, see above.

²³ See Titus 1:12: “Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons.” Kallimachos quotes this proverb in his Hymn to Zeus, see Kallimachos, *Werke. Griechisch-Deutsch*, ed. Markus Aspeker (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 388–89: Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύσται (Cretans are always liars). According to ancient sources, the primary statement is made by the philosopher Epimenides of Knossos (alive circa 600 BC) (see Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.14), who himself was a Cretan, which leads to the so-called Epimenides paradox (i.e., a problem with self-reference in logic).

parative” value concept. In a classificatory system, we have only the extreme opposite judgements “good – bad; worthy – worthless, etc.” (works are classified as good or bad; see Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14), whereas with a comparative concept, norms and maxims are discussed along the line of a hierarchy of values (not so good – good – better, etc.). In the letter to Titus, such crude antithetical value judgements are dominant and are most obvious in virtue and vice catalogues, but also in the author’s characterization of the opponents as good and bad moral characters.²⁴ To mention one example: “Works” have value within the framework of good deeds, which are mentioned various times within the letter. However, in Titus 3:5 there is a clear hierarchy where the “works of righteousness” are clearly subordinated to God’s mercy (ἔλεος). To evaluate the relevance of a norm, one must also evaluate the rhetorical setting of the norm. Though εἰρήνη (Titus 1:4) is an important norm in Greek philosophy and also in other Pauline letters (Galatians and Romans), it occurs only stereotypically in the *proemium* without any specific value in Titus.

2.5 Forms of Ethical Reflection: Generating Moral Significance

Above we have defined ethics as reflection on human behavior. Therefore, the question arises: How does this reflection take place? In what way and with what ethical arguments is a particular ethical judgment made plausible? In what way is “moral significance” explored?

One fundamental distinction in ethical argumentation exists in the difference between *deontological* and *teleological* argumentation. Ethical argumentation is *deontological* when the value of an action is deduced from a prescribed norm (τὸ δέον), that is, an “obligation” or “duty” to do so. In Titus we can find one such argument, for instance, in Titus 1:9: κατὰ τὴν διδασχίην.

The motive is *teleological* or consequential when the value of an action is measured by its goal (τὸ τέλος) or consequences. The ethical judgement is dependent on the outcome or impact of an action or behavior. There are various examples of such ethical reasoning in the letter to Titus. At the end of the first section of the household code, the reason for the wrong behavior is related as follows: do this/be like this ... “so that (ἵνα) the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:5). On the contrary, it will be blasphemy if the audience does not behave accordingly. In the same passage, there are two additional ἵνα-clauses (Titus 2:8, 10) that mention consequences which should be avoided or preferred. In other words, the way of living is evaluated by such consequences, and therefore evaluated as good or bad.

²⁴ On the antithetical pairing, see Annette Bourland Huizenga, “Moral Education in Titus: Antitheses for Ethical Living” (in this volume).

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