

## BOOK REVIEW

Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSSup, 280; New York/London: T. & T. Clark, 2005). xii + 354 pp. Hdbk. US\$150.00.

The growing understanding that there is a careful order and structure exhibited within the Pastoral Epistles motivated Ray Van Neste's book *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles*. Van Neste believes that these letters were not haphazardly thrown together or compiled, but show a conscientious construction using recognizable literary techniques. As a result, the letters' author expresses his own style by developing and returning to different themes throughout the correspondence.

In his introduction, Van Neste initiates the reader into the debate surrounding the structure of the Pastoral Epistles. He begins by providing background information regarding how previous scholars have viewed the unity of the Pastoral Epistles and continues by discussing the growing trend within scholarship that understands these letters to possess internal cohesion. Van Neste is quick, however, to reinforce the idea that this is still a disputed area within scholarship. He believes that this is the case because scholars have attempted to look only at the big picture, but have failed to trace the movement of language through each letter asking how each sentence and paragraph is connected to the whole.

As a result, Van Neste utilizes this approach in his study of the Pastoral Epistles. To achieve this, Van Neste attempts to incorporate three different disciplines in his methodology. The foundational discipline is discourse analysis, a subset of modern linguistics, which is primarily concerned with boundaries and cohesion. The second area is rhetorical analysis, specifically the area of 'style', which incorporates

different rhetorical devices. The final discipline is ancient epistolography.

Van Neste continues in his methodology section by defining and discussing the uses of cohesion fields, and rhetorical devices, such as repetition, chiasm and parallelism, and semantic chains. It is through these devices that he attempts to justify his understanding of the Pastoral Epistles. Overall, Van Neste provides a respectable overview and introduction of discourse analysis and how it can potentially be used to determine structure and cohesion.

Chapters 2, 4 and 6 are dedicated to dividing the letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus, respectively, into distinct units of thought in order to examine the cohesiveness of each unit. These divisions are determined by shifts in cohesion fields, common transitional devices and discourse analysis, such as semantic chains and participant reference. Within each unit, Van Neste attempts to determine the cohesion of the section by using these tools. Mostly this is done admirably; however, there are a few occasions when he forces a rhetorical structure on the text, which results in a weak argument for cohesion.

One of the main focuses within these chapters is Van Neste's response to J.D. Miller's book, *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). In fact, in almost every unit Van Neste responds to Miller's argument. This provides a good frame of reference for the reader regarding the oppositional view. However, Van Neste does not interact very much with other scholars who doubt the cohesion of the Pastoral Epistles.

Chapters 3, 5 and 7 focus on the subsequent connections between the discrete units developed in the corresponding previous chapters. Here, Van Neste examines the conjunctions, transitional devices and cohesion fields that are important to discourse analysis. This is followed by an examination of semantic fields that cross over different units and participant references. Finally, Van Neste explores the relationship of these larger units to the development of the unity of the letter as a whole.

It is in these chapters that Van Neste's argument for cohesion is specifically developed. Using semantic chains and their placement within the different sections, Van Neste makes a strong argument for the cohesion of the different letters. He shows how the various semantic chains are used to tie the different sections together and how they provide the overall theme of the different letters.

One of the strengths of Van Neste's work is that he interacts well with modern scholarship and the different commentaries on the Pastorals. In addition, he makes good use of discourse analysis and related features, such as participant reference, boundary markers and semantic domains to develop cohesion within and between units.

On the other hand, there are a few weaknesses that detract from the overall persuasiveness of his argument. There are a couple of instances where Van Neste makes overarching statements regarding Greek literature, specifically concerning the formation of ancient letters; however, he does not provide any references, either primary or secondary, to support these claims.

Another issue, which was mentioned above, is that at times Van Neste forces some rhetorical structure onto the text. For example, there are a few instances in 1 Timothy where Van Neste suggests that a chiasm provides rhetorical structure. However, a couple of these chiasms are not clear and are not well laid out. This, as well as other instances, leads to occasional weak arguments for cohesion within the different units. Overall, Van Neste could have been a little more rigorous and thorough with his work and theory.

In conclusion, Van Neste's book *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles* provides a unique and fresh insight into the unity of the Pastoral Epistles. It evaluates the cohesion of the Pastoral Epistles from a number of different perspectives and comes alongside recent scholarship to make a strong claim for the unity of the Pastorals. Overall, this book makes a fine contribution to the study of the Pastoral Epistles and warrants consideration by those who are in this field of study.

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