THE DEVELOPMENT OF STYLE
(FIFTH CENTURY BCE TO SECOND CENTURY CE)
AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE STYLE OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Classics scholars have recognized that style, both in terms of theory and practice, was an important element of ancient writing. Strangely, however, very little has been written by New Testament scholars about how an understanding of ancient style affects one's understanding of the writings of the New Testament.[1] These scholars dedicate very little attention to the style of documents apart from some cursory notes in commentaries about the style of a particular Epistle or Gospel. It is often assumed that style in the first century CE was static and established. But style in the first century CE, as I will show, was anything but static and established. The purpose of this paper is threefold: to map the development of literary style, to demonstrate the consequences this development has on the way one examines the style of the New Testament and to make a brief application to 2 Tim. 4.1-8.

I will limit my research to the development of style in the Greco-Roman period and Greco-Roman influences. This is not to say that there are not other potential influences during this period, nor is it to say that other cultures did not have their own stylistic features. So I am not presupposing in this article that the New Testament writings can only be understood within the context of Greco-Roman discourse. Clearly others have done work in this field and have shown the influences of different cultural streams. Certainly the Far Eastern cultures had their own unique literary stylistic features, though it is doubtful

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1. Certainly Rowe's article in Porter's excellently edited work is a push against this state of affairs. See Galen O. Rowe, 'Style', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 BC–AD 400* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 121-58.

that they would have had any influence on Greco-Roman style or the style of the New Testament. Examination of the influence of Babylonian and Assyrian milieus, and particularly how they influenced the style of the Old Testament and possibly indirectly the style of the New Testament, is another avenue that could be explored. Some work has been done to show the common ground between the Johannine style and some Qumran material. These cultures are certainly closer to the time period and geographical region of the New Testament than others (e.g. the Far East). But it would go beyond the scope of this paper to engage this task. My goal is more modest, limiting myself to the Greco-Roman reflections on style. But I believe that this endeavour will be profitable.

Development of the Three-Style System

Few theories are instantly created in their entirety; rather they develop over time. The theory of style of writing is no exception. As Roberts notes, writing style has its roots in rhetoric.[2] Therefore, I will begin with the inception of rhetoric and trace the resultant development of this style.

It is difficult to determine who was the inventor of rhetoric. Diogenes Laertius (early third century CE) states that Empedocles (493-433 BCE) was the inventor of rhetoric. He bases this conclusion on a statement from Aristotle's lost work, entitled *Sophist*.[3] More likely the roots of rhetoric can be traced to Corax and Tisias of Syracuse of the fifth century BCE. These men began to investigate the field of probability[4] and to consider the best method of arranging topics in order to win litigation over property rights. In essence this became the basis of judicial rhetoric.[5] Making use of developments in rhetoric, Gorgias (485-380 BCE), the student of Tisias, came from Sicily to Athens in 427 BCE, and introduced his artistic prose style to the Attic world. He was warmly received in Athens because of the Athenians' strong

2. W. Rhys Roberts, *Demetrius on Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), p. 1.

3. Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 4.3.

4. Roberts, *Demetrius*, p. 2. See also Plato, *Phaedr.* 267a who refers to Tisias's work on the importance of probability.

5. George A. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 58.

penchant for oratory. What he did was create an adorned style of prose by bringing to it the 'colour, warmth and rhythmical movement'[6] of poetry. The grand style was born. Gorgias is an important figure because he influenced later greats like Thucydides (460-400 BCE), who soon became the model for the grand style because of his use of embellishment and adornment.[7]

Lysias (who lived 459-380 BCE), a contemporary of Thucydides, was a *logographos*, that is, a speech writer for litigants going to court.[8] Since he worked among the ordinary people he became an expert in the use of the language of the ordinary life. According to Dionysius, he became the paradigm[9] of the unadorned style, which was also called the *plain* or *simple style*. Dionysius,[10] remarking on Lysias's style, says that it was characterized by clarity, purity of language, lucidity of subject matter, brevity, terseness, characterization (i.e. portraying the moral characteristics that would win over the audience), propriety (i.e. choosing the proper words for a given audience or for a given section in a speech), persuasiveness[11] and charm (i.e. an intrinsic grace and beauty). Therefore, Lysias's work marked the foundation of a second type of style, the plain style, which was opposite to the grand style.[12] The grand and plain styles constituted the two original styles.[13]

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6.   Roberts, *Demetrius*, p. 3.

7.   Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Dem.* 4.

8.   Initially, Lysias instructed people who were going to court for a fee. Later he chose to write their speeches, possibly because this was more lucrative. See Kennedy, *Persuasion*, pp. 57-58.

9.   Dionysius, *Lys.* 2.3.5.

10.   Dionysius, *Lys.* 2-16.

11.   Note Dionysius's comment about Lysias's ability to dignify a subject, express himself clearly and persuasively without the use of embellished language: 'But though he may seem to express himself like ordinary people, he is vastly superior to any ordinary writer' (Dionysius, *Lys.* 3; Roberts, *Demetrius*, p. 8).

12.   Russell goes back farther in Greek literature to the ἀγών between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1058-1059), where he believes he can find a division between the grand and plain styles. Russell's position is doubtful since the reference he uses does not constitute a clearly articulated position but rather a vague reference at best. See Donald Russell, *Longinus: On the Sublime* (LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 152.

13.   Dirk Marie Schenkeveld, *Studies in Demetrius on Style* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1964), p. 55.

Dionysius[14] hesitantly credits Thrasymachus of Calchedon with creating the third style, which was called the *middle style*, and considers Isocrates, Plato and particularly Demosthenes as paradigmatic of this style. The middle style was the mixture formed through the combination of the grand and plain styles. It is logical to attribute this to Thrasymachus (457-? BCE) since he was a contemporary of Georgias and Lysias. Furthermore, it seems inevitable that a contemporary would combine the two styles shortly after their creation.

The theory of style continued to receive attention from several writers during the fourth century BCE.[15] Aristotle dedicates the third book of his treatise *Rhetoric* to this topic, though he does not divide style into grand, plain and middle. Rather he understands style in terms of specific necessary virtues, of which clarity is the most important. Theophrastus (370-278 BCE), an associate and successor of Aristotle, wrote an influential treatise[16] Περὶ Λέξεως, though there is no extant copy. In this work he developed Aristotle's theory of virtues of style,[17] but as far as can be ascertained from the scant references to his work, he did not deal specifically with the three-style system. *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*,[18] a practical book on political oratory, includes no specific reference to three-styles but devotes a few chapters (22-28) to specific topics concerning style. The comments on aspects of style in these chapters resemble some made in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* concerning clarity, diction and antithesis. From these three works we can already see that there was possibly some dissatisfaction with the three-style system, as authors chose to look at style more in terms of specific virtues. The concept of virtues is developed later during the period from the second century BCE to the second century CE.

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14.   Dionysius, *Dem.* 3.

15.   See Cicero, *De or.* 2.160; *Brut.* 46; *Inv.* 2.6. Cicero makes reference to a book (i.e. Συναγωγὴ Τέχνων), lost to us, in which Aristotle records the rhetorical theories of his predecessors. This work most likely contained references to style too.

16.   W. Rhys Roberts, 'The Greek Words for "Style": With Special Reference to Demetrius περὶ Ἑρμηνείας', *Classical Review* 15 (1901), pp. 252-55 (252-53).

17.   Several of Theophrastus's ideas can be found in Demetrius, *Eloc.* 41, 114, 173, 222, 250.

18.   Wendland attributes it to Anaximenes of Lampasacus (380-320 BCE) as the author, based on a quote from Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.4.9). See Wendland's comments in P. Wendland (trans.), *Aristotle: Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (LCL; London: Heinemann, 1937), pp. 259-60.

Disappearance of the Three-Style System

I will begin this section by showing that the three-style system was the firmly established position on style, followed by four factors that led to its disappearance.

Three-Style System and Imitation

Although there was great interest in issues of style in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, there is a lacuna of comment in the third and second centuries BCE.[19] Of course it is possible that there were works written during this time that have been lost. But most scholars agree that it is more likely that there was little change in the theory of style during this time because most ancient writers had embraced the three-style system as the firmly established norm.[20] The reason for this is not certain, but I propose that the role that imitation of the classic writers played in the Greco-Roman culture was the main reason.

Imitation played a significant role in education. In the first stage of education,[21] the *primary* level, a child learned the basic structure of a letter (i.e. the opening, body and closing) through copying out various model letters[22] found in a handbook[23] and/or those given out by the

19.   To get an overview, see Roberts's chart in which he lists the individuals who wrote on style during the period from 500 BCE to 200 CE (Roberts, *Demetrius*, p. 50).

20.   See Kennedy, *Persuasion*, pp. 278-82; George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 84-86; Dionysius, *Dem.* 3.

21.   The traditional view of Greco-Roman education is that it progressed through three stages of education, the primary (ages 7-11), secondary (ages 12-17) and advanced (ages 18-21). Prior to the age of seven the child would be reared at home by his mother and/or nanny, but at the age of seven the child would be sent to school; see H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (trans. George Lamb; London: Sheed & Wared, 1977), p. 142. Sometimes, for aristocratic children, this time would be extended so that they would have private tutoring until they were ready to enter the secondary level. It should be noted that the traditional view may not have been normative for all people. The education of individuals, as Stowers notes, was largely dependent upon the 'available resources and needs, especially outside the major cities' (Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986], p. 32).

22.   The traditional view is that letter-writing was not introduced until the secondary level (Abraham Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986], p. 6*)*. This is doubtful. Marrou notes

teacher.[24] But in the second level of education,[25] letter-writing, under the tutelage of the *grammaticus*, was examined in terms of grammar.[26] Furthermore, students would be given exercises from a handbook requiring them to write out a letter according to a specific type in order to familiarize students with a variety of letter types and to teach them how to write different kinds of letters.[27] Malherbe is certainly correct when he states that the Bologna Papyrus is an example of 'the exercises of a student writing different types of letters, probably following a handbook'.[28] At the end of the *secondary* level and certainly in the *advanced* level,[29] students were trained in a series of rhetorical

that the common way for a child to learn to write was to copy various exemplary works as models. Therefore the child would be introduced to different types of literary works, including a variety of letter-types. This would have taken place at the primary level (Marrou, *History*, pp. 155-57, 269-71).

23. Stowers concurs with my observation when he says, 'like most other instruction in antiquity, letter writing was taught by the imitation of models rather than through theory and comprehensive rules' (Stowers, *Letter Writing*, p. 33).

24. Keyes refers to the work of A. Erman, *Die Literatur der Aegypter* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1923), who mentions that Egyptian teachers would supply actual letters and specially composed letter forms to serve as models for their students (C.W. Keyes, 'The Greek Letter of Introduction', *American Journal of Philology* 56 [1935], pp. 28-44 [31]).

25. Cicero and Quintilian were advocates of a well-rounded education during this stage, which included grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic astronomy and music, though as Ferguson points out, most were fortunate if they received arithmetic and music above and beyond grammar. See Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 84.

26. According to Marrou, Dionysius Thrax's short handbook on grammar, Τέχνη, became the basic textbook. On the basis of this work, children were required to analyze a given text according to the type of nouns, verbs, participles etc. used (see Marrou, *History*, pp. 171-72). See also Apollonius Dyscolus, *Synt.* 42-47 (in Fred W. Householder [trans.], *The Syntax of Apollonius Dyscolus* [Studies in the History of Linguistics, 23; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981]). See also Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, p. 6, and Hugo Rabe, 'Aus Rhetoren-Handschriften', *Rheinisches Museum* 64 (1909), pp. 284-309 (291 n. 1).

27. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, p. 6.

28. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, pp. 4-5; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, p. 33.

29. As rhetoric developed as a science and became increasingly more technical, it forced some of the preparatory exercises to be handled in the secondary level under the auspices of the grammaticus. The Greeks, and to a lesser extent the Roman rhetoricians, objected to this phenomenon on the grounds of the difficulty of

exercises called *progymnasmata*. These were a series of exercises compiled in increasing difficulty in order to develop the student's ability to write in different genres[30] and styles and to critique works in accordance with certain rules.[31] Of particular importance was the exercise called *prosopopoeia*. Prosopopoeia was an exercise that required the student to imagine a particular situation with a certain (usually famous) person and create a dialogue imitating the style and character of that person.[32] What is clear is that in each of the levels of education the students were expected to follow the style of a classic writer who exemplified one of the three styles and thus the three-style system became the established norm.

Change to the Four-Style System

In contrast to the third and second centuries BCE, which were marked by a paucity of writings about style, the first century BCE through to the second century CE had a significant number of works dedicated to style. Several works during this time period include sections on the three-style system, thus showing that it was still a relevant and practised style (*Rhet. Her.* 8;[33] Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 20-21; *De or.* 2.177; and *Bru.* 201-202; Quintilian, *Inst.* 12.10.58). But in the first century BCE and through to the second century CE there are specific changes, which show that the rigid three-style system began to be challenged by a new perspective on style.

teaching the *progymnasmata*. See Marrou, *History*, p. 172; Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.1.5, 25.

30.   Donald A.F.M. Russell, 'Progymnasmata', in N. Hammond and H. Scullard (eds.), *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 883, lists several types of genre: fables, narratives, moral anecdotes, maxim, refutation and confirmation, encomium, comparison, piece written in character, description, abstract question, introduction of a law.

31.   Marrou, *History*, pp. 173-75.

32.   For an understanding of the *prosopopoeia* of Hermogenes in his *Progymnasmata* see Charles S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959), pp. 23-38.

33.   The three-style system first appears in this work dated in the first century BCE. This work has been attributed to Cicero, Cornificius and Unknown (Auctor). Likely the last option is best. For a good discussion of the options, see Harry Caplan (trans.), *Cicero, Rhetorica ad Herennium* (LCL; London: William Heinemann, 1964), pp. vii-xvi; Kennedy, *New History*, pp. 208-209.

Demetrius's expansion of the three-style system to a four-style system constitutes one of the major changes to take place. In his treatise *De Elocutione*,[34] he presents his four-style system, which includes the grand (μεγαλοπρεπής), plain (ἰσχνόν),[35] elegant (γλαφυρός) and forcible (δεῖνος) styles. He is adamant that the elegant and forcible styles are newly created styles, and that they are not simply two middle styles that have been created out of some combination of the grand and plain styles.[36] Not only did Demetrius's four-style system represent the last attempt to refine the three-style system[37] but it also provided the way forward for an increased emphasis on virtue as the basis of style. How did this happen? Demetrius increased the number of styles to four in order to meet the need of different styles for different occasions. He was the first to encourage the interspersing of styles so that a particular work could now include sections using elements of the grand, elegant, forcible and plain styles.[38] Each style had certain characteristics or qualities with which it was associated. For example, the plain style was to be vivid (§209-220) and persuasive (§221-222) whereas the elegant was to be typified by charm (§128-172), beauty and smoothness (§173-178). Demetrius's work started the shift from choosing a specific style in which to write an entire document to focusing on achieving certain qualities or characteristics. The result was the eventual disappearance of the three-style and four-style categorization and a movement toward a virtue-based style, which I will now explain.

Movement towards Virtue-Based Style
The third factor leading to the disappearance of the three-style system was the move towards making *virtues* the basis on which the style of written work was judged. The concept of virtues of style began with

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34.   I am agreeing with general scholarship that the author is not Demetrius of Phaleron, but possibly someone with the name Demetrius, and the dating is in the first century BCE.

35.   Demetrius also includes a section on *epistolary style* which he considers to 'be a compound of two styles, the graceful and the plain' (Demetrius, *Eloc.* 235).

36.   Demetrius, *Eloc.* 36.

37.   For a similar conclusion, see Cecil W. Wooten (trans.), *Hermogenes: On Types of Style* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. xvii.

38.   Though Demetrius encouraged the mixing of styles, he was firm that the grand and plain styles not be combined because they are 'irreconcilably opposed and contrasted' (Demetrius, *Eloc.* 36).

Aristotle in the fourth century BCE, who remarks 'let the virtue of style be defined as "to be clear" (speech is a kind of sign, so if it does not make clear it will not perform its function) and neither flat nor above the dignity of the subject, but appropriate'.[39] Later in the fourth century BCE, Theophrastus (370-278 BCE) took Aristotle's idea and created a system of four virtues: purity,[40] clarity,[41] propriety[42] and ornamentation. Interestingly, Cicero (first century BCE), who adheres to the three-style system, also includes a separate section outlining certain virtues necessary in and important to style.[43] Dionysius, in his disquisition entitled *De Compositione* (written early in the first century BCE), puts forth melody, rhythm, variety and appropriateness[44] as the necessary elements[45] in a work that is characterized by attractiveness and beauty.[46] Similarly, Longinus, in his work entitled *De Sublimitate* (first

39.   Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1404b1.

40.   Purity refers to choosing the correct word in terms of morphology (i.e. tense, gender, number and case). Cicero says 'in order to speak correctly we must…be careful both to produce words that no one can justly object to and to arrange them in respect of cases, tenses, gender and number in such a manner that there may be no confusion and false concord or wrong order' (Cicero, *De or.* 3.40).

41.   The meaning of a statement is to be clear and to dispel confusion. Cicero writes that clarity is achieved 'by talking correct Latin, and employing words in customary use that indicate literally the meaning that we desire to be conveyed and made clear, without ambiguity of language or style, avoiding excessively long periodic structure, not spinning out metaphors drawn from other things, not breaking up the structure of the sentences, not using the wrong tenses, not mixing up the persons, not perverting the order' (Cicero, *De or.* 3.49).

42.   Propriety refers to communicating what is appropriate to the audience, the type of speech, the occasion of the speech and the speaker's character (Kennedy, *Persuasion*, p. 276; Cicero, *De or.* 3.210-212).

43.   Cicero, *De or.* 3.24-37; *Rhet. Her.* 4.8-15.

44.   For explanations of these terms, see Dionysius, *Comp.* 11-20, and Chrys C. Caragounis, 'Dionysios Halikarnasseus, *The Art of Composition* and the Apostle Paul', *JGRChJ* 1 (2000), pp. 25-54 (31-37).

45.   Dionysius presents the threefold function of the writer as, first, to observe which combinations naturally produce a beautiful, attractive united effect; secondly, to judge how these parts are to be shaped in order to fit together harmoniously; thirdly, to judge if any modification (i.e. subtraction, addition, alteration) is necessary to create this harmony and beauty (Dionysius, *Comp.* 9).

46.   Attractiveness is characterized by freshness, charm, euphony, sweetness and persuasiveness, whereas beauty is characterized by impressiveness, solemnity, seriousness, dignity and mellowness. Thus a particular piece of prose could be attractive but not beautiful and vice versa. See Dionysius, *Comp.* 10.

century CE),[47] omits the three-style system for his fivefold 'sources' (πηγαί).[48] The fives sources are grand conceptions, vehement emotion, proper construction of figures (i.e. speech and thought), nobility of language and elevated word arrangement; these are necessary to create sublime literature. These individuals are representative of the change in thinking about style, moving from a three-style system to a virtues-based system of style.

As I have shown, through the course of time, virtues-based style gained in popularity and the three-style system decreased in prominence. In order to get a clearer understanding of the change from the three-style system to the virtues-based style system it is necessary to consider the influential work of Hermogenes of Tarsus (second century CE).

Hermogenes (170 CE) replaced the three styles with seven ἰδέαι: clarity, grandeur, beauty, rapidity, character, sincerity and mastery (i.e. force or gravity).[49] Conceptually these ἰδέαι[50] are the same as the virtues to which Theophrastus referred, though expanded in number. They represent the *types* or *ideal forms* of style that were exemplified foremost in Demosthenes, but that a writer can also learn to use. The following quotation of Patterson is a good summary of Hermogenes' system of style:

> The aim of Clarity is that the audience should understand what is said, whereas Grandeur is designed to impress them with what is said. Beauty is designed to give pleasure, Speed to avoid boredom, Ethos helps to win over the audience by allying them with the speaker's customs and character, and Verity persuades them he is speaking the truth. Finally Gravity...stirs up the audience, and they are carried away by the

47.   For the dating of Longinus, see John M. Crossett and James A. Arieti, *The Dating of Longinus* (Studia Classica; University Park, PA: Department of Classics, University of Pennsylvania, 1975). These authors take the position that Longinus wrote in the middle of the first century CE and reject G.M.A. Grube's position that he wrote in the third century CE (G.M.A. Grube, *A Greek Critic: Demetrius on Style* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961]). For further discussion on this matter, see also Russell's preface in *Longinus: On the Sublime*, pp. 145-48.

48.   Longinus, *Subl.* 8.1.

49.   Hermogenes, *Types* 224-225.

50.   Some of these ἰδέαι have subtypes through which they are produced. For example, the ἰδέα *clarity* is produced through the sub-types of *purity* and *distinctiveness*.

completeness of the performance, not only to accept what they have heard, but to act upon it.[51]

Gravity or force, the last virtue, requires the expert usage of the other six.[52] For Hermogenes, then, the greater the mastery of these virtues the better the style.[53] The result, therefore, is that the style of a written work was no longer categorized in terms of grand or plain style, rather it had good style (i.e. it was well written and incorporated these virtues) or did not have good style (i.e. it was not well written and did not incorporate these virtues).

Hermogenes believed that these types of style are to be blended together and there is a great degree of interweaving between them. Furthermore, in examining the style of a piece of work he thinks in terms of sentences or paragraphs rather than entire speeches or large sections thereof. Therefore, within in any given document there may be stylistic variation depending on what the author is attempting to achieve (e.g. beauty versus gravity). This is a departure from former literary theorists who considered that an entire written work would have to be written in one particular style, like the grand, plain or middle style.

Hermogenes' work marks the watershed moment of oratorical and written style.[54] His very influential work replaced the three- and four-style systems and became the standard on style for the next several centuries.[55] But was Hermogenes the catalyst for change or was he simply putting into words what was in fact the norm for that day? The most likely scenario is that notions of style were changing progressively through the first century CE (as I have shown earlier) and the change was finally established in Hermogenes' work.[56] Roberts's conclusion sums up the situation well:

51.   Annabel Patterson, *Hermogenes and the Renaissance: Seven Ideas of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 33.

52.   Wooten, *Hermogenes: On Types*, p. xvi.

53.   According to Hermogenes, Demosthenes best exemplified these seven virtues and was therefore the paradigm of style.

54.   Wooten notes that these virtues can be fitted superficially but not naturally into the general categories of the three-style system (*Hermogenes*: *On Types*, p. 133).

55.   Wooten, *Hermogenes*: *On Types*, p. xvii.

56.   Wooten says, 'it is quite clear that *On Types of Style* is the culmination of a tendency in Greek rhetorical criticism to refine more and more the concept of

By Hermogenes, as by Dionysius two centuries earlier, Demosthenes is regarded as the best model for oratorical imitation. Probably this fact was now so generally allowed that the earlier classification of writers according to styles seemed out of date and useless. The types of style [i.e. one-, two-, three- and four-style systems] had served their day; one had been added to the other, and the distinctions between them had worn thinner and thinner. It may well have seemed that the only thing left was to assume a number of general qualities of style and to regard Demosthenes as displaying them all with brilliant effect.[57]

Change in the Role of Imitation

The third change causing a movement away from the three- and four-style system to a virtues-based system of style was the change in the role of imitation. As I showed earlier, students were instructed to imitate the style of a classic writer (e.g. Plato) who exemplified one particular type of the three styles. But in the first centuries BCE and CE there was a movement toward a more eclectic approach. As Dionysius's and Demetrius's work shows, students were being encouraged to follow the best aspects of the various classic writers and combine them in their writing. Furthermore, the role of the teacher changed during this period. In the earlier period (fifth to second century BCE) the teacher pointed the student to a classic writer to follow, but by the first century CE the teacher became the focal point of imitation. The teacher continued to present the various models for imitation but the expectation was that the student was to imitate the example of the teacher. This is well demonstrated in Quintilian's remarks:

For however many models for imitation he [the teacher] may give them [the students] from the authors they are reading, it will still be found that the fuller nourishment is provided by the living voice, as we call it, more especially when it proceeds from the teacher himself, who, if his pupils are rightly instructed, should be the object of their affection and respect. And it is scarcely possible to say how much more readily we imitate those whom we like.[58]

stylistic virtues that had been begun by Theophrastus' (*Hermogenes: On Types*, p. xvii).

57.   Roberts, *Demetrius*, p. 27.
58.   Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.2.8.

Teachers now being the paradigms[59] would inevitably lead to a proliferation of models. Within this context it is understandable why theorists on style did not increase the number of paradigms but instead chose to set forth the important virtues of style that were necessary in a written work and the writers who best exemplified them. Interestingly, many theorists agreed that Demosthenes best exemplified the most virtues.

Understanding the Style of the New Testament

Changing Milieu on Style and Methodology

In the previous section I have shown that the concept of style was not static but rather it changed significantly from the fifth century BCE until the second century CE with the most significant changes taking place during the first century BCE through to and including the second century CE. The result was that several systems of style existed during the time the New Testament was being written. The styles were often associated with specific names. Quintilian, writing during the first century CE, held quite strongly to the classical three-style system. The effect of Demetrius, who promoted a four-style system, was probably still felt in the first century CE. Dionysius (first century BCE), Longinius (first century CE) and Hermogenes (second century CE) opted for a virtues-based system of style, which became the paradigm from the second century CE onwards. Cicero (first century BCE) straddled the fence, choosing an eclectic approach marrying the three-style system with a virtues-based one. Therefore, in the first century CE there were at least five different perspectives on style in circulation (Cicero, Demetrius, Dionysius, Longinius, Quintilian). How then is the modern scholar to categorize the style of the New Testament writings in light of the diverse and varied opinions on style that existed in the first century CE? There are a few options.

The first is to apply all the treatises on style to the New Testament letters without regard for issues of dating. Under this option, one could apply Julius Victor's work *Ars Rhetorica* and Demetrius's *De Elocutione* with equal liberty, even though the former is from the fourth century CE and the latter from the first century BCE. But clearly it is not

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59. For a similar conclusion, see Benjamin Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (AnBib, 105; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986), p. 34.

appropriate to apply an idea from the fourth century CE to a first-century writing. Though scholars have done this, it is certainly a flawed method because it creates chronological dissonance. Furthermore, it is not necessary, since the scholar can date the various treatises with reasonable certainty.

The second option is to determine the specific style handbook the writer has used. This option assumes that the New Testament writer has been influenced by specific treatise(s) on style. The scholar tries to determine the system(s) of style the New Testament writer used when they wrote. To do this requires discovering: (1) the likelihood of the New Testament writer being influenced by a specific style treatise through determining the provenance and date of both works and (2) the educational and cultural background of the New Testament writer, in order to determine the likelihood of the writer being taught style from a specific treatise.

Once these have been determined, only those treatises on style that have influenced the writer are used in the evaluation of the author's style. Though ideally this is an attractive option, and to its credit there has been an attempt to correlate the respective dates of the New Testament documents and treatises on style, it is nevertheless not a viable or realistic option. It is fraught with difficulties in determining the exact dating and provenance of the various writings, ascertaining the identity of the authors, and particularly descrying their educational and cultural backgrounds. We must look elsewhere for an appropriate methodology.

The third option compares the style of the New Testament document with the contemporary treatises on style but with no view to determining the specific treatises on style that influenced the writer. This option is concerned with evaluating the style of a New Testament document by the norms of style prevalent at that time. Unlike in option two, the scholar is not trying to prove that the author has written their work with a conscious awareness or knowledge of a specific treatise on style. The scholar is concerned with establishing the dates of the treatises on style and the particular New Testament writing within a reasonable degree of certainty. The scholar's concern is to ensure that the New Testament writing does not predate the treatise on style, which is more reasonable and possible to determine. The strength of this position is that the modern scholar is provided with a fairly clear

understanding of the contemporary norms on style with which to compare the New Testament writing. This is the favoured position.

One final comment is in order. It is tempting for scholars, when examining the style of the New Testament, to superimpose the 'grids' found in these ancient handbooks on style onto the New Testament writings by over-enthusiastically trying to force the New Testament material into these pre-existing moulds. Scholars have done the same thing in applying rhetorical categories to letters. For example, Longenecker, under the influence of Betz, squeezes the Epistle to the Galatians into the framework of a forensic speech.[60] In my mind, it does not fit. A moderate and realistic approach to examining style is needed. The New Testament writers probably reflected on what and how they were going to write their material. It is doubtful that they went directly to an ancient rhetorical handbook and followed exactly the prescriptions on how to write something in a particular style. It is more likely that their understanding of style was ingrained in them through education, reading various materials and experience, and that they wrote their letters or Gospels in different styles, almost unconsciously. Therefore, as I will show, the style of the New Testament writers may demonstrate direct, some, little or no correlation to the different aspects of style outlined in the handbooks.

Style Must Not Be Defined or Applied Narrowly

Style is a broad category and the ancient rhetoricians dedicated a large portion of their handbooks to this topic. According to Rowe, style had four components: *correctness*, *clarity*, *ornamentation* and *propriety*.[61] Correctness refers to the proper use of the language in terms of grammar, particularly avoidance of *barbarisms* (e.g. transposition of letters) and *solecisms* (i.e. misuse of an adjective in a sentence).[62] Clarity is derived from the correct choice of words and apt word order so that the reader immediately apprehends the writer. The ancient rhetoricians dedicated most of their attention to ornamentation. The four elements of ornamentation are *tropes*, *figures*, *composition* and *rhythm*. Quintilian defines a trope as 'a change of a word or phrase from its proper

60. Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), pp. vii-viii, cx-cxiii.

61. Rowe, 'Style', p. 122.

62. Rowe, 'Style', pp. 122-23.

meaning into another for the sake of effect'.[63] Examples of tropes are metaphors, hyperbole and litotes. Figures are twofold: word figures (i.e. how words are placed together, e.g. anaphora, ellipsis, chiasmus) and thought figures (i.e. structuring words in order to affect the reader). Composition is concerned with word arrangement and how a writer structures a sentence. Rhythm is really a sub-category of composition since the author arranges the words in such a way as to create a particular rhythm for denoting the sentence-end (*clausulae*) or to enhance assonance etc.[64] Propriety is the result that is achieved when the three aforementioned aspects of style are suitably applied and their respecttive opposites/vices are avoided, and the writer chooses the style appropriate to the occasion.[65] Since style has many elements, it is essential to evaluate the style of the New Testament from a broader perspective. This may seem to be obvious, yet it is a point often overlooked in the study of the style of the New Testament.

Years ago, Deissmann fell prey to this error because he understood style basically in terms of language and rhythm. He was attempting to show that Paul's letters were not literary works because they lacked elevated language characteristic of literary works written in a grand style,[66] and they (e.g. Galatians) were not written with due 'observance

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63.   Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.1.

64.   See my work on this (Craig A. Smith, *Timothy's Task, Paul's Prospect: A New Reading of 2 Timothy* [Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006], pp. 175-78).

65.   Rowe, 'Style', p. 155.

66.   It is doubtful whether Deissmann's understanding of language and rhythm is correct either. There is a wide variety of rhythm used in writing. At one end of the spectrum is highly rhythmical writing like poetry and at the other end things like receipts or lists and everything else in between. Similarly, language varies according to the type of literature, so that poetry is highly figurative whereas business letters are not. Therefore, when Deissmann compares the poetry of the classics with Paul, all scholars would concur with him that Paul's letters do not appear very rhythmical or figurative in comparison. But the same would be true if the same standard was held against the letters of Cicero and Seneca, who are considered rhetoricians and familiar with the classics. Is it fair then to say that the style of Paul's letters is indicative of non-literary works? I do not think so. Caragounis has shown recently that Paul does, in fact, include rhythm in his letters and uses figurative language as is *appropriate* to prose (Caragounis, 'Dionysios', pp. 49-50). The key factor that Deissmann has missed is that style in terms of rhythm and language must be appropriate to the work being written, as Dionysius makes clear. To use excessive rhythm or poetical vocabulary is inappropriate in prose, because the result is that the written work is no longer prose but poetry (Dionysius, *Comp.* 25).

of the rhythmical rules of art'.[67] In limiting his definition of style to language and rhythm, Deissmann created a definition that was too narrow to sustain, and led him to erroneous conclusions.

In contrast to Deissmann, Keener, in his commentary on John, demonstrates better practice by evaluating the style of John's Gospel on a broader footing. In terms of subject matter, he notes that John's enigmatic style and high Christology are similar to the grand style found in Menandor Rhetor 2.1-2; 368.9.[68] In terms of composition, he notes the emphasis on repetition (Jn 1.15, 30; 4.29, 39; 13.16; 15.20), which is reflective of the grand style, the use of simple language, which is reflective of the plain style, and the inclusion of cacophony, which is an aspect of the forcible style.[69]

Thielman, in his article 'The Style of the Fourth Gospel', does an excellent job of examining the style of this Gospel. His concern is to show that 'the unusual features of John's grammar and narrative are intentional'.[70] He debunks certain myths, such as the theory that these features are the result of a Greek translation of an Aramaic original, or that the abrupt transitions are due to poor editing or mistaken arrangement of codex leaves. He shows convincingly that John is in fact following 'certain canons of ancient religious literary style'.[71] Thielman compares John with the observations of several ancient writers on style and notes different aspects of style. He discovers that the three main aspects of style that the author of John employs are sublimity, obscurity and solemnity. These aspects account for the unique manner in which John is written and the way that the material is arranged. The author of John has written in a style that befits the content he is presenting. In doing so, he is following Greco-Roman literary protocol. Thielman

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67. Adolf Deissmann, *The Philology of the Greek Bible: Its Present and Future* (trans. R.M. Strachan; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), pp. 144-45.

68. Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), p. 48.

69. Keener, *John*, pp. 48-49. Keener, however, has room for improvement, since he has left out John's use of creative imagery in the 'I am' sayings (e.g. vine, bread, door etc.), hyperbole (3.3 'being born again'; 6.53 necessity of eating the flesh of the Son of Man; etc.) and John's use of long periods comprised of several cola and phrases, which create a sense of beauty.

70. F. Thielman, 'The Style of the Fourth Gospel', in Duane F. Watson (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), p. 182.

71. Thielman, 'Style', p. 182.

correctly upholds the fact that ancient writers perceived a relationship between style and subject matter, and that the style of the writing had to be adjusted to the topic being addressed. For example, if one was writing about divine or great matters, one should write in an elevated style.[72] The author of John followed this ancient practice.

New Testament Writings Are Not Uniform in Style

One major mistake scholars have made in the past and continue to make in the present is to assume that a particular New Testament book was all written in one style. Bultmann believed that Romans was written in the style of diatribe, which was popular among the Cynic-Stoic philosophers.[73] Stowers and Moo have uncovered the flaws of this idea and rightly show that there are parts of Romans in which the diatribe style is used, but the letter as a whole does not demonstrate the style of diatribe.[74]

Years earlier, Deissmann made this mistake and hopefully we can learn from him. Deissmann was attempting to show that Paul was not a literary man[75] and that the letters he wrote were not written in the sophisticated style of literary letters. He was attempting to draw a wedge between literary letters (i.e. epistles) and non-literary letters (i.e. personal correspondence). According to him, literary and non-literary letters were opposites, having nothing in common except basic form (i.e. opening, body, closing).[76] According to Deissmann, the style of Paul's letters was not reminiscent of the grand style of the classical writers but rather the plain style of the commoner.[77] Deissmann became critical of any attempt[78] to compare Paul's letters with the artistic

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72. Longinus uses Gen. 1.1 as an example (Longinus, *Subl.* 9.8-9).

73. Bultmann had the *Discourses* of Epictetus (first to second century CE) particularly in mind.

74. Douglas Moo, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 15.

75. Deissmann says unashamedly, 'I have no hesitation in maintaining the thesis that all the letters of Paul are real, non-literary letters. Paul was not a writer of epistles but of letters; he was not a literary man' (Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910], p. 232).

76. Deissmann, *Light*, p. 220.

77. Deissmann, *Philology*, p. 143. See Friedrich Blass, *Die Rhythmen der asianischen und römischen Kunstprosa: Paulus, Hebräerbreif, Pausanius, Cicero, Seneca, Curtius, Apuleius* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1905).

78. Deissmann, *Philology*, pp. 142-44.

works found in classical literature.[79] Norden was particularly criticized for his work, *Die antike Kunstprosa*,[80] because he suggested that the New Testament letters contained artistic prose. Similarly, Deissmann was critical of Blass's work, *Die Rhythmen der asianischen und römischen Kunstprosa*,[81] which suggested that Paul's letters contained rhetorical devices indicative of *hochliteratur*.

Though Deissmann did not believe that Paul's letters resembled the grander stylized classical works, he nevertheless said that Paul's letters had great *beauty* and *grace* or *charm*. It is interesting to note that these are two of the qualities necessary in producing the *elegant* style according to Demetrius.[82] The elegant style is a style much grander than the plain style to which Deissmann assigned Paul's letter. So in fact, his observations did not inform his conclusions. One might suppose that this error would be easily avoided and we would learn from

79. Adolf Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (trans. Alexander Grieve; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), p. 63.

80. Eduard Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. jahrhundert V. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance* (Leipzig: G. Teubner, 1915).

81. Many scholars have shown the fallacy of Deissmann's conclusion and the explicit use of rhetoric in many of Paul's letters. I mention only a few: Paul A. Holloway, 'The Enthymeme as an Element of Style in Paul', *JBL* 120 (2001), pp. 329-39; George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Duane Liftin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation* (SNTSMS, 79; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Duane F. Watson, 'The Contributions and Limitations of Greco-Roman Rhetorical Theory for Constructing the Rhetorical and Historical Situations of a Pauline Epistle', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 125-51; Duane F. Watson, 'Paul's Speech to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20.17-38): Epideictic Rhetoric of Farewell', in Watson (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry*, pp. 184-208; Duane F. Watson, 'A Rhetorical Analysis of 3 John: A Study in Epistolary Rhetoric', *CBQ* 51 (1989), pp. 479-501.

82. Demetrius, *Eloc.* 156-162. The elegant style is characterized by grace, charm and liveliness. This is achieved through the use of proverbs, fables, comparisons, through the choice of words characterized by smoothness and beauty and by arranging the sentence structure so that the last clause of the sentence should be climactic.

Deissmann's mistakes, but unfortunately it continues to rear its ugly head.[83]

The main reason for rejecting the idea that a particular New Testament writing would be written in only one style comes from the ancient writers on style. They believed that the author must exercise 'rare judgment and great endowment' in order to use the style appropriate to the situation.[84] Cicero advocated that different styles be used to correspond to the different issues being addressed[85] and that were appropriate to the audience being addressed (e.g. their age, status).[86] Demetrius, who espoused the four-style system, believed that letters should be written in the plain style[87] but could incorporate other styles too.[88] Thus a letter could include elements that were characterized by the forcible or elegant style.[89]

Style Is Not Based on Socio-Economic Factors

Kümmel equated the style of the Gospels with the lower classes and their *folk literature*.[90] Similarly, Deissmann believed that Paul's letters came from the environs of the lower socio-economic classes[91] and therefore had more in common with the language and style used by these people and not the artistic style of the upper classes.[92] Primitive Christianity, they believed, was the religion of the poor, not the rich, and therefore they presupposed that the authors of the New Testament would write in the corresponding manner of the poor, that is, in a non-literary manner. For this reason, he considered the non-literary papyri to be the best material with which to compare the Pauline letters.

83.   Keener lists other examples in Craig S. Keener, *Matthew* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 17.

84.   Cicero, *Brut.* 70.

85.   Cicero, *De or.* 210-211.

86.   Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 24, 212.

87.   Demetrius, *Eloc.* 223.

88.   Demetrius, *Eloc.* 235. Philostratus of Lemnos also agreed that the plain and elegant styles should be combined in letters. See *De Epistulis* by Philostratus of Lemnos as found in Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, p. 42.

89.   I have shown this to be true; see Smith, *Timothy's Task*, pp. 167-95.

90.   Werner G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), p. 37.

91.   Deissmann, *Light*, p. 144.

92.   Deissmann, *Light,* pp. 140-42.

There are a couple of problems with this type of thinking. First, the best way to determine the style of a New Testament writing is not by determining the socio-economic class of the author but by examining the handbooks on style that reflect the standards of the time. Secondly, this line of thinking assumes that the Christian movement was not a religion of the rich but of the poor, therefore these writings could not reflect the grand style found in some of the classic writings. Several New Testament texts show that the Gospel was not only for the poor but reached the rich too (Jn 3; Acts 16.11-15). Also, it is quite likely that Paul, as a Pharisee who was able to study in Jerusalem at the feet of the famous Gamaliel, was of some means. Having lived in and studied in Tarsus, a hotbed of education and rhetoric, would have made him competent to write in an elevated style.

Application to 2 Timothy 4.1-8

A simplistic approach to this text would conclude that it has one uniform style and is written in the plain style based on Demetrius's statement that letters are to be written in the plain style. But a closer comparison of this text with the epistolary and rhetorical handbooks shows that the style of this text is much more complex. In fact, there are three types of style used in 2 Tim. 4.1-8; the forcible, plain and elevated style, in order to produce a strong persuasive command.

The Charge Form in 2 Timothy 4.1-8

In terms of composition, the style of 2 Tim. 4.1-8 has the following structure:

> Charge Verb and Authority Phrase 4.1
>> Content of the Charge 4.2
>>> *Reason for Charge 4.3-4*
>> Content of the Charge 4.5
> *Paul's Autobiographical Comments 4.6-7*
> Implications of the Charge 4.8

The person charged is assumed.[93] The sections not in italics are charted below:

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93. Smith, *Timothy's Task*, pp. 26-66.

charge verb	authority phrase	content of charge	implications of the charge
διαμαρτύρομαι	ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, τοῦ μέλλοντος κρίνειν ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, καὶ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ·	κήρυξον τὸν λόγον, ἐπίστηθι εὐκαίρως ἀκαίρως, ἔλεγξον, ἐπιτίμησον, παρακάλεσον, ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ διδαχῇ. ... σὺ δὲ νῆφε ἐν πᾶσιν, κακοπάθησον, ἔργον ποίησον εὐαγγελιστοῦ, τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον.	λοιπὸν ἀπόκειταί μοι ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος, ὃν ἀποδώσει μοι ὁ κύριος ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, ὁ δίκαιος κριτής, οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐμοὶ ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἠγαπηκόσι τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτοῦ.

Second Timothy 4.1-8 is a unique literary form, which I have called a 'charge'. The structure of this text is the same structure found in exorcisms (Mt. 26.63; Mk 5.7; Acts 16.18). Thus Paul is using a very forceful literary device in order to get Timothy to obey him.

The charge verb, authority phrase and content of the charge all use the forcible style, and are characterized by brevity, conciseness, many short clauses, an *apostrophe* and *cacophany*. The reason for the charge and Paul's autobiographical comments use the plain style, characterized by *clarity* and *vividness*, and both are introduced by γάρ. Paul's autobiographical comments are examples of *characterization*, in that the author portrays the moral characteristics of someone that will win over the audience. In 2 Tim. 4.6-7, Paul presents himself as the paradigm of faithfulness, self-sacrifice and steadfastness, and thus one who has been doing the very things he commanded Timothy to do in 4.2, 5.

In terms of *diction*, Paul's style is noteworthy. He stacks up terms in the authority phrase (God, Jesus Christ, the judgment, Christ's parousia, the kingdom of God) in order to bring authority and power to bear upon the charge being given to Timothy. The charge verb Paul chooses, διαμαρτύρομαι, conveys the image of Paul testifying, even acting, on behalf of God and Christ as he commands Timothy to fulfill the various elements of his calling. The style of the implications of the

charge section is *elevated* through its use of metaphorical language (crown of righteousness), elevated subject matter (parousia of Christ), long rhythmic clauses describing Christ, the one who bestows the reward, and those who will receive the reward.

The tenor of this text, with its grand conceptions, vehement emotion, proper construction of speech and thought, nobility of language and elevated word arrangement is closely parallel to the five 'sources' of Longinus's *De Sublimitate* of the first century CE.

The style of this text has significant correspondences to the theories on style prevalent in the first century CE and points to the author's awareness of style and his sophistication in using style. Clearly the style of this text is mixed, but the various styles work together in order to produce a powerful charge to Timothy,[94] who finds himself in a very difficult situation in Ephesus.

Conclusion

I have shown the origins of the three-style system and how this system was eventually replaced by a virtues-based system. The key period of time in which the concept of style underwent significant changes was during the first century BCE to the second century CE. The major changes included the introduction of Demetrius's four-style system, shift from understanding style in terms of categories of style to specific virtues, and the change in the role imitation played in education. The first century CE was characterized by a variety of systems of style, including a three-style system, four-style system and a virtues-based system. Given this milieu I recommend that scholars use a specific methodology that reflects the variety of contemporary systems of style when evaluating the New Testament writings. I have made three suggestions for evaluating style: one does not consider the style of a writing on the basis of socio-economic factors; one rejects the idea that New Testament writers used only one style; and one should apply a broad definition of style in order to have the best understanding of the style of a New Testament document. When my conclusions are applied to 2 Tim. 4.1-8, we discover a richness in the language and structure that convey the gravity of the situation and therefore the need for Timothy to obey.

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94.   Smith, *Timothy's Task*, pp. 171-95.