

## Structure and Literary Forms

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A recent book by Craig A. Smith titled *Timothy's Task, Paul's Prospect: A New Reading of 2 Timothy*<sup>1</sup> uses “epistolary form criticism” to analyze 2Ti 4.1-8. Smith discusses the concept of forms in the epistles and convincingly argues that valid types of forms have a structural rigidity apart from content issues. Structure, not content is a form's defining criteria. The structure of the form is what allows a form to be isolated and considered. Smith writes:

Therefore the first important factor in defining the basis by which a literary form is determined is to identify structure as the primary criterion. To do this is not to neglect content, style and function; it is only to subordinate them to structure. **In practical terms this means the criterion of structure should be applied first in order to determine the literary form, and then the criteria of content, style and function should be used to confirm the results.**<sup>2</sup>

## Forms Examined

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This paper works through examples of proposed epistolary forms, searching for suggested form structure using the *OpenText.org Syntactically Analyzed Greek New Testament* as primary corpus.

- Disclosure Form
- Greeting Form
- Request/Petition Form
- Joy Expression
- Charge Form

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Craig A. *Timothy's Task, Paul's Prospect: A New Reading of 2 Timothy*. Sheffield: The Sheffield Phoenix Press. 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, 10.

## Disclosure Form

The disclosure form is comprised of the following basic items:

- verb of wishing/desiring as **Predicator**
- verb of knowing, in the infinitive mood, as an **Embedded Clause**
- a **Secondary Clause** with  $\delta\tau\iota$  or  $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$  further explicating the subject to be disclosed.

## Greeting Form

The greeting form is comprised of the following basic items:

- The greeting verb ( $\acute{\alpha}\sigma\pi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ ) as **Predicator**
- Indication of the person being greeted as **Complement**

## Request/Petition Form

The greeting form is comprised of the following basic items:

- a first-person present tense form of a “petition verb” occurs in the text as the **Predicator** of a **Primary Clause**.

## Joy Expression

- either:
  - the verb  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\iota\rho\omega$  (“I rejoice”) in the aorist tense as **Predicator**
  - or the noun  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  (“joy”) in the accusative case as **Complement** and the verb  $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omega$  as **Predicator**
- a **Secondary Clause** with the object which was heard, introduced by  $\delta\tau\iota$

### Charge Form

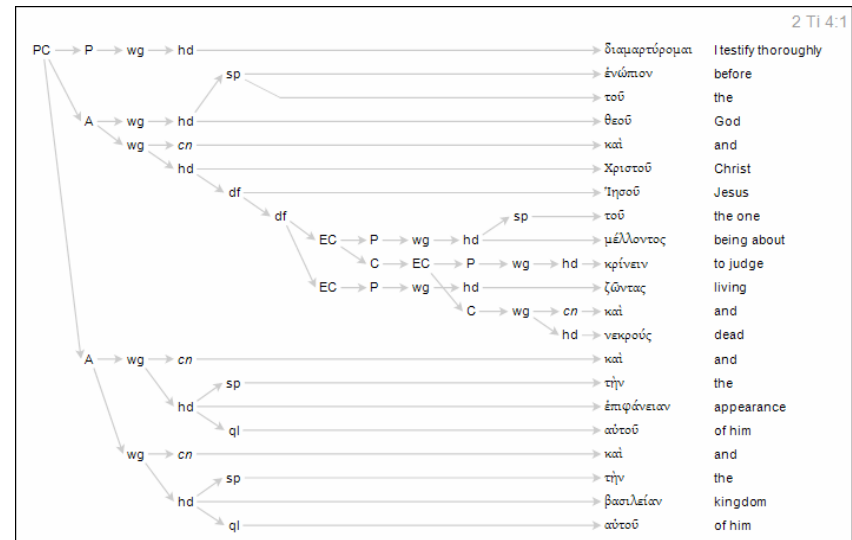
- The charge verb (διαμαρτύρομαι, παραγγέλλω, μαρτύρομαι, ἐνορκίζω, εχορκίζω, ὀρκίζω, κελεύω, παρακαλέω, ἐντέλλομαι) as **Predicator**
- The persons charged (optional)
- The authority phrase as an **Adjunct** or **Complement**, containing:
  - “supernatural being or power” (Louw-Nida domain 12) as **Head Term**
  - or οικτιρμος, οικτιρμων or ονομα as **Head Term**
- The content of the charge

### Conclusions

A syntactically analyzed corpus, such as the *OpenText.org Syntactically Analyzed Greek New Testament*, is a valuable tool to use when examining the New Testament for instances of forms that are defined largely by structure and secondarily with lexical criteria.

- Potential instances of literary forms, when defined structurally, are locatable with syntax searches
- The “signal to noise” ratio is low. False positives occur, but when searches are properly structured, there are typically more “true positives” than “false positives”

Therefore when words or phrases are in relationship with each other (as they are in these sample forms), a syntax search is appropriate because it enables one to account for these higher-level relationships along with morphological and lexical criteria.



### Bibliography

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